ETHOS
Nick Stokes
nox

Ethos

or, Good Afternoon

Nick Stokes and You

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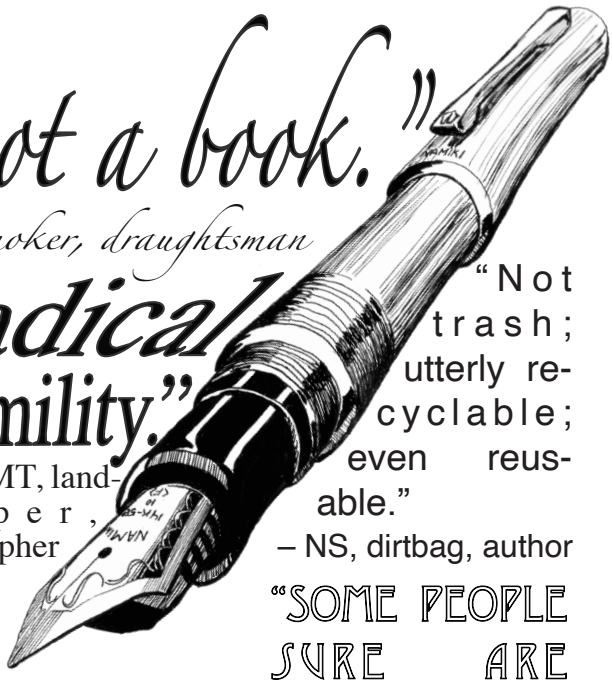
Ethos or, *Good Afternoon*, is a found object.

Marcel Duchamp, *Door, 11 rue Larrey*, 1927.

"This is not a book."

– Magritte, pipe smoker, draughtsman



"WOW. Radical Humility."

– MT, landscaper, philosopher

"Not trash; utterly recyclable; even reusable."

– NS, dirtbag, author

"A FURTHER installment in Nick Stokes' canon, most works of which I've had to stop reading because they hurt my feelings."

– JPS, gleaner, lover

"SOME PEOPLE SURE ARE DIFFERENT."

– ET, ACCOUNTANT, DRAMATIST

This is a BOOK

– JP, witch, artist, gluer

"I don't know any other experimental prose writers."

– MH, cyclist, poet

"DO NOT READ this *-* book."

– Grover, customer service, monster

"And you thought you was heavy with your own self."

– old man on a hill

"WHO'S YOUR AUDIENCE?"

– MM, KINDERGARTEN TEACHER, EXISTENTIALIST

"Fucking mind-bending"

– TT, chemical engineer, book club participant

FIELD NOTES

Nick Stokes and You

1-9-23 / 3-31-23

1/9/23

January Ninth, Two T

I sh[illegible]
That is ridiculous. It is the afternoon now, much too early for me to have showered in the past today. But I will. I will have showered today. Or else I have already, on another day. In a different day.
In truth it is not even the afternoon. I pretend. Because I told myself I would journal in the afternoons. In the late afternoon, is what I told myself, the mass of the doings of day behind me. Journal, for some reason, almost evening, but not quite, not yet, the sun descending but not descent, or yes descent, the quickening, the gloam, it is winter after all. But no, the point for me to remember is it is still yet the afternoon. A compressed afternoon, perhaps mid-afternoon, the sky darkening, consider the season.
For the love of god, why? To record my experience. Therefore, I must experience.
One should not pretend, should not fake it. One should know thyself, to thine own self be true, interact with integrity with others & the world one inhabits. And why pretend, besides? I am the only one who will read this. I am the only one here.
Yet, I have do in fact read this journal again, which for from certain, I will be an older man. The same man and a different man and all that. I don't hold truck with paradoxes. Rather, it's just that there they are, what else is there to say? What I was trying to say was that,

Thousand Twenty-Three

I showered today.

That is ridiculous. It is the afternoon now, much too early for me to have showered today. But I will. I will have showered today. Or else I have showered already, on another day. In a different day.

In truth it is not even the afternoon. I pretend. Because I told myself I would journal in the afternoons. In the late afternoons, is what I told myself, the mass of the doings of day behind me. Journal, for some reason, almost evening, but not quite, not yet, the sun descending, but not descent, or yes descent, the quickening, the gloam, it is winter after all. But no, the detail for me to remember is it is still yet the afternoon, the sky darkening. Consider the season.

For the love of god, Why? To record my experience. Therefore I must experience.

One shouldn't pretend. One should know thyself, to thine own self be true, interact with integrity with others and the world one inhabits. And why pretend besides? No one will read this besides me. I am the only one here.

Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards. Søren Kierkegaard supposedly said that in his "Journals" in 1843, he of the fancy Danish ø who knew much of journals, but not of living very long.

Yet, if I do in fact read this journal again, which is far from certain, I will be an older man. The same man and a different man, and whatnot. I don't hold truck with paradoxes. That is not true, but there they are, what else is there to say? What I was trying to say was that, if I read this journal again -- does it qualify as reading it the first

time now as I write, or will the next time be the first time? -- I will be older, and I am already sufficiently old to not be recording my experience in a journal, with all the lovelorn emotion and angst and ache and whyness of an adolescent.

So I am writing my journal in a journal titled Field Notes, which is more befitting a man of my condition than a journal titled Diary. Field Notes is indicative of research, insinuates observation. None of the ache and angst and why for me. A simple record of my experience. Because the mornings are for reflection and thought, and the afternoons are for doing and experience. I have not as of yet at this significant age determined what the evenings are for. But that is not a subject under investigation in the current excursion.

January 10, 2023

After rereading (the 1st or 2nd reading) what I wrote yesterday I feel obliged to remind myself that what is classified as the afternoon is at best a social convention and at worst entirely relative to an individual's subjective experience. It was technically, based on the accepted value placed on the height of the sun, in that it had not yet quite reached its meager peak for the day, late morning when I ventured out today.

In fact, the whole episode is so cliché, so cheesy, cheesy is the word without the Frenchiness, that I cannot share it. I am loathe to, and I would not, but for the knowledge that it is only I, even if he is a different I, who will read this,

who will share this experience with me at some point in the future.

There was a rainbow. It was awesome, in the sense awesome used to mean. At least that's what they say. Producing awe. What a way to start. I've already butchered it, a hack job, blood everywhere. I've given no sense of what the rainbow felt like, the whale's been flensed, I detest shock gore horror.

Here is how it began. The morning had been of the miserable variety, outside, which is where I prefer to be, but where I wasn't, where it was gray and gray and raining and gray. Whether the sun had ever risen, or if it will have had, was in question. Nevertheless I stepped through the door from the inside to the outside because I was, I am, alive and I sensed the day slipping away again. I walked the few blocks to the central park, where I might encounter ducks and geese and gulls at the pond and innumerable dogs on leashes, with my head down, lost in myself. But crossing the street at the light necessitated the raising of my eyes, so as not to become a smear on the pavement, which was when I noticed the elephants either gesticulating skyward to each other with their trunks or silently gazing up. The men and women in their cages shouted to their neighbors and pointed their phones. The tethered ones, the war mongers stripped and painted blue, paid the sky no mind, grunting and snuffling on all fours as was their obligation. I too turned my vantage upward.

What the elephants and persons in cages gazed at was not, as I initially suspected, the sun exploding or an asteroid on a collision course or one of our decrepit communication or surveillance satellites falling out of orbit to terrorize us, but the brightest rainbow I had ever seen. The dark clouds and mist remained, but the sun had broken through in the west, hence the prisming or refracting or bending of

light, one of those rainbows you could see from end to end, one of those you could climb if you could just get a little closer and reach for a handhold, one of those that made you marvel, what kind of world is this that can produce such magic, where the magic is science, where the refraction is commonplace and stunning. (The placement of the winter sun argues that I am wrong and the rainbow occurred in the late afternoon, right before I attest to writing this, but the sun does a lowly job of delineating time this time of year.) The rainbow doubled. It tripled. There were three rainbows. It froze one's thoughts; they stopped one in one's tracks. It lasted 15, 20, maybe more minutes. I know because I walked through the entirety of the park to where I could see it unobstructed, end-to-end over the sound, the rainbow moving with me, in relation to me, existing in just that space, through just that refraction point, for me, something similar for thousands, millions, near me, but not exactly the same for any of us. A collective experience for the elephants and the caged and those of us who went out the door, if not the pigs. But an individual experience for each all the same.

At some point I looked away and looked back and the rainbow was gone.

I remember what I did in the late morning, which I confused with the time of the rainbow experience. I read a poem, which is not an activity of which I oft partake. I reproduce only a portion of it here, for I would not want to be accused of plagiarism or copying or thievery, so that he, my future self, might remember it, or be reminded, or research it up again amidst the digital detritus, the heap of our disposables. "The Days" by Adrienne Su:

> *If only I could live my life, not write it,*
> *I'd have double the experience*
> *And be better at nothingness, at being present.*

The author goes on to record a friend from college who committed himself to never journaling, so as to always be present. One should be present. One should live in the moment. Perhaps field notes are not the best way to make sense of things, but I know no other way to reanimate the rainbow.

1-11-23

Furthermore, this morning I encountered the beginning of a book, "Case Study" (2022) by Graeme Macrae Burnet:

> *I have decided to write down everything that happens, because I feel, I suppose, I may be putting myself in danger, and If proved to be right (a rare occurrence admittedly) this notebook might serve as some kind of evidence.*

The I in this instance seems to be the female main character. The I's proliferate, but she has an appealing notion, and who in the end cannot help but be present? All the other I's are present, all the past I's from yesterday and yesteryear, all the future I's, all the he's will be present, all the she's for that matter. Perhaps an I am responsible for will one day read this, though it is best not to think of them doing so, I suspect. One must compartmentalize to survive. But if they are here, reading these notes now, mentalizing, as their own I's someday down the road, then they too are present. We are all present; it cannot be helped.

So I introduce myself to one last I for today, from COME, from "Panics" (1969) by Barbara Molinard, translated (2022) by Emma Ramadan, salvaged (1969) by Marguerite Duras:

> *Today I'm finally starting on the goal I've set for myself: to write down the things that happened to me in a diary so I can have an exact record of them later on. This will also allow me to impose a bit of order on my thoughts.*

Also

> *I feel too sluggish to imbue my notes with the necessary details.*

Of course, I am not keeping a diary; I am taking field notes. And while she conflates the two, I see fit to maintain the delineation. Nevertheless, the I's will have their say in my words. To me.

Am I going to include every reading I encounter relative to journaling, recording, observing, every found bit of discarded text, every bruised apple or warped lumber or two-legged carrot? I bore myself.

> *You preserve your moral integrity and tell the truth. And then the worms get you.*

Cornel West once said that. It's how I try to live. The hogwash; I try to wash the hogs. I do not. I try to live, to live.

Clearly I have done nothing today. I have not left the house. I have not stepped through the door simultaneously opened and closed. I certainly have not showered. You know the elephants have not been out there walking about doing nothing. They've been minding the persons in cages, coaching them. They've been attempting to herd the rhinoceroses stampeding in the streets, with what suc-

cess I do not know, though I am pessimistic. They've been trying to wash the pigs. They have been committing conscious acts of betterment and distribution and they too have been whipped and chained and made to balance on a ball while balancing a ball on the tip of their trunk. It is afternoon after all.

While I have done nothing. When I referred to a "you" previously, I was, by necessity, referring to an I. There are only I's here.

A week ago, however, there was a moon when I rose, after I arose, a moon setting in the northwest, after I performed my morning ablutions, such as they are, nearly 8:00 in the morning, but dark, still dark, unaccountably dark, an enormous full winter moon low in the sky in the northwest, in a time and place no moon should be, the dawn late, so late, the dark persistent, an enormous face glowing in the dark, a reflection of the sun onto me, the sun's light traveling one direction from the past bounced back to me from an unexpected vantage. There was nothing to do but gaze through the window upon the sphere of rock, the circle of light gazing at me. But that for a moment, for several moments, felt like the thing to do.

January 12

What am I, a nature lover? Can nothing else move me, float my boat, jostle my train?

I do live a small life, of approximately 7.5 mile radius, 10 miles radius at most. $2\pi r$ for the circumference, πr^2 the integral, the area under the curve so to speak, moving up

a dimension, you do the math, by you I mean me. We could take the integral again, $(4/3)\pi r^3$, but why, the volume of the sphere is highly inappropriate, there are several ways to do it, cones, pyramids, circles, does math too excite me? Jesus. *You do the math* is merely to say it is not worth my while at this juncture to fetch a calculator for you, possible future me. Off the top of my head, 314 some odd square miles in area centered on my residence, not to get too specific, which sounds like far too many. My place of employ is as of this writing 5 miles from my place of residence, though it fluctuates from time to time, and my primary mode of transportation is electric moped, so as to contribute as little as possible to the continuing degradation of our collective place of residence. I keep my house cold in the winter; I shower infrequently; I wash my clothes a bare minimum for social acceptability; I buy little, consume what is necessary, grow a garden; I waste not, want not. I overstate myself, and inflate the import of my actions to the cusp of burst. But I do endeavor to leave as little trace as possible.

One of my rare investments, besides the moped, is the solar panels on my roof, the value for the world done by which is quite ambiguous.

My other preferred method of locomotion is on foot. I would use public transport, but of late, that is for a century or more, historically then, our society, who is us, we then have not valued public transport and therefore have not invested in it, and thus public transport is a trash heap. But by good fortune, but also by choice, I live within walking distance of a grocery, a library, a post office, a pharmacy, my doctor and dentist, local craftsmen and women, multiple joints to fetch a pint and possibly camaraderie when I venture forth for the company of others, theaters, churches if I were so inclined, which I am not, restau-

rants, parks, shops, museums, even a waterway. Which is to say I have little to complain about.

What then is this ache to behold, to embrace the moon, to catch the rainbow, to walk into the sun?

Bah, garbage, this is just description, not observations or happenings befitting of field notes.

It occurs to me that I must have been going to work at some point in the last several days. It has not been the weekend, not the whole time. There are people there also for whom I am responsible. But he, the previous I, neglected to note my money earning life. The omission is confounding, since how we earn a living defines us. But, beyond social criticism, is it not indeed how we spend our time which defines us, or at least is it not one of the primary angles from which to view who we are and what we value? Who we are is what we do. But I suspect he, to whom I am closely related, is himself confounded by the fact that his primary occupation is as a caregiver, and questions if such a way to spend one's time is worthwhile, to earn a meager living, or if instead it is so commonplace as to be not noteworthy. It is not the sort of endeavor that earns awards or accolades, that builds monuments, that is lauded, not the sort of occupation one seeks or that might lead to a great discovery or experiment, and therefore perhaps it should not be written about. It should be swept under the rug. Or moreso, omitted.

I counter him; these are field notes.

I went to work on my moped at dawn. It was not raining, but I took care. At work, I gave care. I returned midafternoon. There was a touch of false spring in the air.

After which I went on a walk through the park, as per usual, and I noticed something unusual. Not unusual, in fact quite the opposite (I think it very usual), always there though I had previously failed to notice. Patches of the moist ground pulsed, undulated, writhed. The elephants kept their distance from these patches of muck, but an occasional blue pigman would wallow therein. Those that did were slowly subsumed by the muck. Upon closer observation, I saw the quivering, motile muds were not in fact cohesive unitary living masses but individual parasitic profiteers slurping like snails stripped of their shells, like slugs sucking the blood of the earth, like parasitic nematodes latching onto pigmen, like leeches draining you and me and us like tapeworms. From the inside then. Who is you? They are very difficult to see, they were, conforming to the contours of the ground, the pigs, the muck, our bodies. But now I cannot get them out of my eyes. I close my eyelids and try to sleep, yes this early, very late afternoon, dark already, but I cannot because it is as if the soft-bodied pulsations have latched on and wormed in through my eyes, the only place my brain is directly exposed to the outside.

January 13

Good afternoon. I mean, goddamn, that's part of the point isn't it? (A certain cordiality with myself, with him, with "you," with the page.) What's with this rhythm, this need to wrap up each entry, each day with a bow or a bomb?

The time is the afternoon, and it is still, or already, dark.

Did I finish my story? I slept, yes I slept eventually, not easily. I feel like I did not, but I know he did, he must have, he woke up. He went to work. He gave care. He came home. Here he is. It's as if he never left. And now he is me.

The elephants and pigs and tapeworms are out there; we are in here.

The dilemma is obvious, and almost too cheesy to state, like a good quesadilla. Should I stay or should I go? He longs to go out the door that is both open and closed. Like a fool, a roustabout, a vaudeville character, he desires the moon, the rainbow, the ever exploding sun. But these young humans who live with him, who he works with, for whom he is responsible. Will they too grow to be of significant age? Will they too become other people who are the same but different, universal but unique, trying to imagine the others of themselves in the future and comprehend the others of themselves in the past -- a hall of reflection and refraction stretching forward and backward through time -- and be responsible for other humans who will themselves also live lives and grow to a significant age and be responsible for other human who will have multitudinous experiences to attempt to make sense of.

Why always the writing about the conditional instead of action?

Should I leave them? Could I? Could he? Could you?

Another day (1/14 it must be) of attempting to foist my longing and responsibilities on another.

Yes, fine, I showered today, after I took my exercise, but what kind of measurement is that? The elephants dodge

the tapeworms, the leeches, make a decision, and/or learn to live with them, but I'm still here.

How can one not be present? One can go.

I can imagine the edge of a treeline, reflected in a puddle in a flooded midwinter field, gulls wading or walking on water, whatever gulls do, the ocean crashing in the distance, silently from here. I can imagine imagining its roar in my imagining of the flooded plain.

There are three forms of freedom:

(David Graeber and David Wengrow, The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity, 2021)

1. The freedom to move.
2. The freedom to disobey.
3. The freedom to reorganize social relations.

I desire to move. If I desire to move I had better learn to disobey. I am concerned for the welfare of those for whom I am responsible.

Every time I step out the door that is open and closed I wonder if the outside world will be there. Again I begin. Again I begin a field note with some generalization, some bullshit about my mental state, his mental state, it helps when considering myself to consider it in the 3rd person, a widely accepted endearing tendency of narcissists the world over for time in memoriam. What does that mean and who am I to say such things before thinking up some detail from my day to construe and justify my supposed noticing of things. Kafka neglected to finish sentences and sometimes broke off mid-word. Maybe I should try harder. You get hungry in the after--

You, meaning me.

Sometimes he wearies of the emotions. The drizzle, the concentric rings, the ripple, the waves interfering and rein-

forcing from each and every raindrop falling from the sodden sky and plunking into the aqueous surface, adding minutely to the volume.

My god, could he get more turgid? More purple?

January 15

More potato? It doesn't feel real is the thing. The elephants could smack him upside the head with their trunks, and it'd smart -- it does; they have; one has; it hurt. I can still feel the weight and breadth of the trunk along the length of my face, chin to ear after all these years, but the pain fades, and the shame, well it doesn't fade but it does something, festers, no, what is the process called by which grape juice becomes wine, which is more useful for a person of my age, ferments, yes finally, it smarts and fades and ferments but here he still is, every single morning, without fail, facing himself, without fail haggling with himself over what to do and why. Which cannot be how real people operate. It's too exhausting. How would they ever get anything done? (If they are incessantly evaluating what they should be doing, what is best to do, what is worthwhile --

> *You realize that life goes fast*
> *It's hard to make the good things last*
> *You realize the sun doesn't go down*
> *It's just an illusion caused by the world spinning round*

(Flaming Lips, Vein of Stars, 2006)

-- what is best for the future of the human species, for the future of the conscious universe, for the future of the person they are today and if they survive the person in

themself that they will encounter tomorrow.) It's Hamlet all over again, and if there is one person in this god forsaken universe I refuse to discuss in my personal field notes it's fucking Hamlet, not withstanding the possibility that he shows up on my doorstep to bitch about his stepfather, which would be warranted. I'd talk with him, but not about him; it's redundant, rehash, repetition. It's all been said by others, and myself to boot. My thrust is that people cannot dither as I. They must determine the indeterminate daily, minutely. But they cannot ascribe value to every miniscule action as he does -- everyone has to wipe their ass, and it's a better experience if they aren't dwelling on it. Everyone has one.

I shit and I stink (Pearl Jam, Satan's Bed, 1994)
I'm real, join the club
I'd stop to talk but I'm already in love

And why are other words, others' words, in other words, more real than his own?

He is watching the rain dapple huge puddles through the window. The ocean pulses beyond the sodden meadow.

Does that sound real? Can you hear it? Do you remember?

January 17

He went. So I too go.

The afternoons are for walking. *Evening is a time of day I find nothing much to say.*

From hear on out, apologies, covering the whole spectrum of locations and times in one bad pun, I can't help it, it's the english language, aquí oí, what's done is done, the convention will be for me to refer to the I that is doing the thing being done now in my noting time as you, so I can talk to myself, since I am the only person here, no matter how many of me there are, since I am the one doing the reading of the notes and the writing of the notes and the doing of the doings in the purported present. It's too confusing; this is why we name things and put them in boxes, to delineate and define and organize the overwhelming quantity of things in the world. And so I designate the person doing as you, and the person recording as me. All of which smacks of a commitment too complete and unwavering for me to stick with forever (adhere would be a better word than stick), but let's try it, two sheets to the wind (sticks and stones may break my bones but words can never hurt me), because something has to change (because, what a word).

He went. Therefore, you go.

You are going.

It is difficult, yes, I know, but you persist.

He sat and dithered and stared at the door that was and is yet simultaneously open and closed. He thought about the elephants and leeches and pigs and rhinoceroses but he could not go among them. He went among them in his mind, but not in body, not how you are now. Where are you now? Mind is separate from body, is it not? He even showered. These were desperate times, just a few moments ago. He considered his responsibilities. To what and whom did he owe himself. He doubted what was worth noting in his notes. He dreamed of rainbows; he

envisioned moons; he imagined exploding suns. Something had to change.

It did. Did it?

Good afternoon.

You go.

January 18

Don't know what to do, but I come to

My brain is not me; it is you.

You live close to the bone. You are outside is where you are, outdoors, close to the bone. You are out of doors.

He, before his long day's journey into night, before his sea change, goddamnit, before he all at once after considerable deliberation at the end of a great quantity of time in a moment fell out of the superposition of going and not going and chose to go out the open and closed door and become you, before he decided how to live, he observed, listened to, and sometimes noted birds in his backyard. In his backyard he experienced being both inside and outside, outside of the physical structure of his house, outside of the door, under the sun adjacent to the trees among the birds and all that, but yet inside the protection of his own mental structure delineated by the tangible fence, chainlink or picket or barbwire, safe from the outside world. These notes are collected from other notes he made on a previous date in another notebook:

August 11, 7:30 am to 8:10 am, Garden

House sparrows always chattering, repeating *Listen to me, to me, to me.* Chestnut-backed and black-capped chickadees converse in the dead mimosa, where the Anna's hummingbirds rest momentarily. The Bewick's wren trills. Bushtits flutter in the bamboo and the red and yellow house finches flock to the kale gone to seed.

The air is heavy with dew, all surfaces damp.

Crows chase off a hawk. The hummingbirds chase away a sparrow. Gulls somewhere chase off an eagle. A firetruck sirens. Dark iridescent but common starlings abide calamitously in a towering neighboring hemlock until the time when I go and they swoop to swarm the yard for worms or bugs or whatever starlings eat (ed: starlings indeed eat insects, and fruit). A supposed cedar waxwing sings in the cherry tree, stripped by ants and time. A Steller's jay awaits an opportunity.

Not to mention the robins, for once unseen.

A spider waits in the center of its web strung between branches of dogwood, fluttering in the breeze.

Elderberry and aforementioned dogwood and dead mimosa and barren fig hedge one fenced border; grape and indomitable akebia and swallowed asian pear and monstrous tomato and bolted asparagus and lost currant and zealous blackberry and insidious morning glory and a stray persevering rose hedge the other. (Ed: apparently there are only two lines, parallel, yet they must nevertheless intersect at some great distance, in a vanishing perspective perhaps, beyond sight, via the bending of spacetime, or simply the curvature of the earth, to form an enclosure.)

A dove coos in the distance. The neighbor's chickens cluck in their coop. More firetruck.

The abbreviated mechanical buzz of black-capped chickadees cranks. A possible purple finch. The cry of a gull.

Everything happens while I wait.

Everything happens while he waits. In the summertime. Perhaps this is how the pyramids were built.

You are making fine use of this afternoon, going, walking. (He recently read one way to redirect an overly negative uncontrolled inner monologue is to address this inner monologue in the second person. I include the advice here because it might be of interest. Which is the intent of note-taking, as I currently understand it.) Out of doors, you pass through the park. You wait at the light for the rhinoceri to thunder by, intent on not being smushed, and then you pass through the park. You weave through the abundant elephants walking their tiny dogs and their huge dogs, their shitting dogs and their shit-eating dogs, their submissive dogs and their cocky assholes, tails raised -- surely there are a few dogs in between; there must be an in-between. The elephants read the newspaper or their phones or more likely listen to a podcast about the world news, about frowning, about true crime perhaps, staring out, eyes glazed, automatically tracking, how they don't fall over walking their dogs -- it must be on account of their four legs. Or else their trunks. Or else they apply their consciousness more thoroughly than you and I. You apply all of it to not fall over into the muck of leeches and pigs. You avert your eyes and do your best to ignore the persons in cages, out of doors day and night, like you now, except they cannot go. They are stuck and without accumulations. They are in possession of piles of accumulations heaped in their cages, but they are stuck with the piles of various usefulness, worth, value. All the piles are worth nothing, but within some are a blanket, a tarp, a shoe. Whereas you are well-provisioned. He packed you a bag. You avert your eyes because they make you feel bad, because you feel bad when you see them. They make you do nothing, they can't, not anymore, they are in cages, if they ever could, and you are not ready to employ your guilt as motivation for action. Except you are walking, going, weaving, passing through the

park waiting for the light to turn and stop the raging rhinoceri before you cross the street and exit the park on the other side.

You go chasing a rainbow, to lasso the moon, to one day experience the exploding sun.

You descend the hill to the water and turn one way or the other. You had better turn left or you'll end up in the miasma of the port, dwarfed and insignificant alongside massive containers stacked like primary color legos by gargantuan container cranes onto leviathan container ships like toys in the distance, through the fog, if there is any. You follow the shore, the walkway, studded with docks. The going is easy, a place for strolling, for pleasure vessels. There is a museum, two. The way becomes more industrial, then less so, more commercial, then park-like, residential up the hill, the residences of elephants and persons up there -- there must be an in-between; perhaps they need to interbreed, the best of both, like mules -- then more commercial again, restaurants, condominium castles, a pleasure palace where all your desires can be sated: ice cream and drink and entertainment and superheroes and spas and all manner of food, fish and pizza and whiskey and popcorn and sausages, but you are not well-provisioned in that way, the monetary way, and that is not what you seek besides, so you press on through the throngs, money flying like butterflies, around the yacht club, until the shore but slowly transitions to beach and the population thins except for seals and eagles and herons and a sea lion and you as me, or is it me as you, at some indiscernible point exit the city in my mind -- to be clear you exit my actual city -- and it is there on a deserted beach, on a point, at no point, at an actual place of indeterminate location, that you encounter the salt whore.

-- You have many buckets.

-- The task requires many buckets.

-- Are you collecting …?

-- I am gathering salt.

-- Where do you carry them?

-- Them? Are you othering the salt?

-- The buckets. It must take a --

-- It does not take that long. I'm not alone.

-- You look alone.

-- I am not.

-- Are we talking about the salt?

-- There are others.

-- Where are they?

-- Not here.

-- They're … further along?

-- They are everywhere. People like you do not see them.

-- Nevertheless, there are many buckets to carry.

-- I used to cry --

-- There are many valid reasons to cry.

-- and sell the salt of my tears.

-- Salt is a necessary nutrient in the diet.

-- That is why I am known as the salt whore.

-- Sodium and potassium ions, for example, are vital to cell transport, and maintaining the proper voltage gradient across the cell membrane.

-- But some time ago, I chose to cry no more.

-- I'm sorry, you must have felt atrocious. The degradation you suffered could only have been justified by the necessities you provided to so many.

-- Shut up. There is abundant salt in the sound water I collect.

-- But you must lug all these buckets --

-- Listen. I am not alone. I simply desalinate.

-- Meaning … you take the saline out?

-- And I share the salt with those who help me.

-- Like the Red Hen.

-- My husband used to be useful by making me cry, but I discovered the sea and sent that piece of work packing.

-- Well that's absurd, you didn't discover --

-- Now I go to bed with the orcas.

-- Orcas live in the ocean.

-- While annotating my brain at night I sleep with the orcas I observe during the day.

-- Like a dream?

-- Fuck dreams. Orcas, killer whales, blackfish, in reality, I see, I sleep with, in my brain, living longer than you, mating, carrying their dead babies for months …

-- Where are they?

-- Where indeed, fool. Open your eyes. Perhaps sprinkling salt in them will help. Salting slugs is effective.

January 21

-- Furthermore, you should not be patronizing me, you should limit your salt intake, you have high blood pressure, I don't know why, genetics, you know why. I don't know why I am privy to said information, but I am privy, you just had a doctor's appointment yesterday afternoon.

-- But the orcas --

-- And further furthermore, as the worldwide average temperature increases and the sea levels encroach, this sea level lapping at our feet, this water saturated with dissolved salt, as saturated as I, super saturated, such that with a slight jostle all my salt will fall out of solution, precipitate if you will, precipitation is a frequent occurrence around here, the incidence of kidney stones rises, just try to walk away, to pass the stone, endure the pain, push it out, kidney disease and kidney failure rise, the need for

dialysis rises, yes yes have a machine clean your blood for you, a nifty solution, or implant a new one, everyone has one to spare, not quite everyone, a simple operation, buy one off the shelf, see if it takes, grow it in a jar, perhaps a pig's will do. But might I suggest you start with consuming less salt. Which is advice that would not seem to be in my best interest, but I have many interests, and many of those interests are interests we share, such as your kidneys. By the nature of my livelihood, which I remind you is desalinating seawater, I am by necessity, by design, nay, by choice not solely the Saltwhore, as persons such as yourself know me, but the Water Bearer. I desalinate the water, I clean it, I bear it to you. And so I say to you, the temperature is rising, the water is rising, kidney disease is rising, and I can feel a stone in you, right there, in your right kidney, your right, from your outward facing point of view. I can feel a protuberance in your lower back, do you feel that, above your right hip, let me guide your hand, right there, yes, yes, I cannot massage it away, you will have to pass it, and it will hurt, hurt like the dickens, there's no way around it, you will simply have to persevere and make better choices, but on that note, and in the meantime, I suggest: Drink more water. The temperature all over the world is rising faster in poor neighborhoods, in areas with a high proportion of people of color, which is not where we are now, we are by sea, which is rising and more frequently flooding and eroding coastline, but which moderates temperature as an enormous heat sink and previously as a carbon sink, and nobody lives here but me, me and the others whom you cannot see, who help, and the seals, and the orcas. There are such things as countries that have the power to change the tides, but I do not endeavor to explain that happenstance. I do, to come to a conclusion, as I am beginning to get bored of talking to you, of performing for you, recommend you limit your salt intake, but especially remember the pain she told you you will

have to endure, the stones you carry inside, the insoluble accretions from your surroundings, no man's an island, no man's a rock, I tell you, and the ice is melting and the seas are rising. Drink more water.

-- How much does it cost?

-- You fool. Lend a hand. Carry a bucket. It costs nothing. It costs your life.

January 22

There she goes, carrying two buckets. She can carry no more, not at one time; she only has two arms, two hands; she is not an octopus, who have eight arms and no hands. He once saw an octopus washed up on a beach alongside some of those who he is responsible for (they weren't washed up on the beach; the octopus was; the octopus was dead; they were afoot). January of 2021, give or take a year or a month. The dead octopus is evidence that he wasn't always homebound. As you know, if you have ever carried buckets of water (pails or jugs or cubies count) from creeks to cabins, up mountains on mulebacks, from seeps to camps, two buckets is plenty for any one person to handle at one time. Water is heavy.

You lend a hand. You carry a bucket. Two hands, two buckets. Or you don't; I don't know. I am concerned with who we are, and who we might yet become. I am too busy to annotate your every action.

That's not true. Noting your action is the only thing I have to do. I am just a little hurt that you left, even though I

wanted you to go, even though I split you off from me so I didn't have to go.

Regardless, you have had a rather attenuated afternoon, so I understand your indecision. Your reluctance.

And yes, to give you a breather and get back to him, despite his fondness for staying in and monking it up, reclusing, eremiting, he has gone out before, from time to time.

Not long ago, on December 29 of 2021, on or in, within that day, in between the hours of 8 and 9, outside the city of Saint Louis, inside the state of Missouri, he identified, recorded, and noted:

> house sparrows, European starlings, house finches, tufted titmouses, white-throated sparrows, Eurasian tree sparrows, the white-breasted nuthatch, the dark-eyed junco, the red-winged blackbird, a blue jay, Carolina wren, American robin, Carolina chickadee, American crow, and the northern cardinal, which is unequivocally the reddest bird imaginable.

In fact, it is redder than imaginable. Redder than you can think, redder than Rothko, redder than blood, redder than strawberries. Redder than sunsets, and you are especially fond of sunsets. I remember other times, seeing the cardinal's red flash against white snow. I don't know what its redness means. He once lived in a basement apartment under a house in Illinois, circa the turn of the millennium, 2000ish, and he watched a red cardinal in winter through a small daylight window. He never noted that cardinal on paper, only in his long ago mind, until I do so now. That might not be true.

But he has always come home.

January 23

You follow her, carrying one bucket, or two buckets, or zero buckets. What else are you supposed to do? You have no other direction but a vague desperation for rainbows and the moon and the sun. And apparently a fondness for birds. You follow her up a steep, muddy (it is January) path through the woods, up a fold in the bluff, through a declivity. After about 10 minutes -- a long time to be carrying buckets of water in my humble estimation -- you notice indecipherable hieroglyphic fluorescent tags spray-painted on trees, carvings of lovers' initials, the occasional assortment of discarded beer bottles and cans, and rope swings of varying arc length and height above the ground and perceived danger. Now you remember, though you did not note it at the time, that you saw -- does that make you a him? -- carvings in relief on a natural clay wall bordering the beach, a castle, a medusa-like sea woman with flowing hair, an octopus with long tentacles, and a fair share of indelicate sexual acts fantastically depicted but difficult to describe in words, not to mention enact.

You arrive in a clearing on a flat piece of ground atop the hill. If not for the encircling trees and the falling gray winter dusk, you could see a long way. In the clearing is a settlement, if you could call it that, a ragtag assortment of tents in states of disrepair, tarps strung this way and that, several unattended fires burning in barrels and in the open. Humans also in various states of disrepair hold flashlights lighting a performance by other humans,

brightly painted. The Water Bearer carries her bucket to a large, tarped cauldron atop a low fire. She jostles the tarp laid over a lattice of branches over the cauldron, sending drips dripping down into a hip-height ring of what looks like old plastic gutters on a scaffolding of branches and scavenged (reclaimed) lumber lashed together by yellow and red and blue and orange plastic cord, which feeds into old pvc tubing running to a tank at the edge of the settlement, below the lip of the hill. She folds up a section of the tarp and pours her buckets in the cauldron. She beckons you, and you do the same, if you chose to carry water.

January 24

You turn to the performance. The actors froth in the sidelight provided by the audience's flashlights before a wagon of the kind pulled by horses or mules, beasts of burden. One of these persons farts into a bullhorn. They are painted, seemingly, in the clays of the bank you remembered you saw in the draw you climbed with the Waterbearer, where flowed a small creek of runoff, which perhaps, you think in retrospect, they do not drink because they contaminate it by their own presence. They the actors are naked, men and women and however they identify from young adult to the elderly, smeared toe-to-tip in clay of myriad shades, don't call it smeared, painted brown, white, mauve, red, almost black, green, yellow, burgundy, purple, orange, chartreuse, dogshit yellow, khaki. (Olive green, sunset orange, you don't want to stop.) A good dozen of them, more, there must be more to accommodate all the colors you see, painted in spots, in stripes, in cross-hatches, in diamonds, in harlequin, in paisley and

plaid, in Gorey, in checkerboard. Broad emotions are painted large on their faces, enormous smiles and frowns, tears of laughter and despair, faces of fear and joy, anger and ecstasy, pain and pleasure, of dominated and dominating. The best word you can come up with to classify them is clowns. You already said actors. Their breasts and cheeks, their phalluses and love handles jiggle as they somersault and squat and wheelbarrow and plie. One leaps from the top of a crate, flaps their wings as if to fly, and crumples to the ground. A substantial woman attempts a cartwheel, and flops into the mud. A man,

January 25

an oaf, hairy and pendulous, rotund maybe, or perhaps aroused, or else slick and young, it's difficult to discern through all the clay paint, lurches toward her. She does not appear so substantial now, prone in the mud. His face is red; his larger-than-life expression is smug; her face is in the mud. Some in the crowd hoot and holler, some stand mute, some bend over and scoop goop from the ground and throw it at him, some have saved produce washed up on the beach for the occasion: rotting onions, moldy chunks of pumpkin, various citrus fruits, gray plastic-wrapped meat, festering. Two clay men, stars painted on their left breasts, cut him off and present themselves to him. He shrinks in disgust and spins, only to encounter two men who might be women, or two women who might be men, or one of each or two of neither, with arrows and circles pointing every which way painted on their bodies, on their body, with a smile and a frown on their painted face. His eyes light up behind the red clay, his expression unchanging, and he stumbles toward their presentation. The hoots and hollers heighten, the silence intensifies, the putrefying produce pulses. At the last moment, as he is poised but uncertain which They to choose, caught in limbo by the superposition of their identities, by They be-

ing more than one thing at once, They spin and slap him away. They slap him with ferocity, leaving handprints on his face, on his body, welts on his pendulum. He cowers. The audience jeers. Everyone jeers, including you, though you are unsure for which reason. They put a top hat on his head, a feather boa around his shoulders. They step back and he stands and They face him. They each punch him once in the gut and he doubles over after each and slowly returns to uprightness. The audience cheers, as do you, as two of their own in black leather and chains step through the fourth wall with spray paint cans and tag him with what could be collapsed skyscrapers, They with what could be the rubble of obelisks, the two men with what could be crumbled Doric columns. Or perhaps they are orchids, orcas, and okra, respectively.

-- The annual initiation of the ritual police, the water-bearer whispers into your ear.

-- Who?

-- We all must perform the function. We are all debased. We all put in our time.

Then she disperses into the crowd again, again? How long has it been since you showered? Since you ate?

The late afternoon is now very dark, but for the fires and the shafts of handheld light. The focus of some of the lights shift and you realize there has been a man clayed in dark gray, like stone, on a pedestal, like an edifice, watching, immobile or unmoving or unmoved. He is without painted expression. He is without expression under the clay. His expressionlessness (you know upon reflection) has not wavered throughout the performance, and his eyes, bright orbs in the dark, have not closed. The initiated police twirl and writhe about him. The audience guffaws

at particularly adept defilements: a beer shotgunned, a spinning piss, naked yoga, naked yoga on a paddleboard, naked yoga with goats, an alluring bendover interrupted by flatulence, an amorous couple picnicking adjacent to a defecation,

Late afternoon, January 25

He laughs at nothing. He is devoid of expression, a man of stone, of marble. They throw a rope over his head and it tightens around his neck and they drag him down and he cracks, he breaks, he shatters into millions of pieces. His blood spills red. He cracks like a Fabergé, a Cadbury, a pysanky egg of a marble man, a shell full of bloodshed shattered. You all cheer. There is a moment of celebration. Then a dirge sounds. This was their father, their brother, their son. They set about picking up the pieces. They put him back together again. They do not miss a sliver. To replace the liquid part of him, the part of him that has soaked into the mud, they pass around a whetted flake of flint, slice the palms of their left hands one by one, and press them to his new old mouth. He rises as someone else.

The audience is silent. The actors, not clowns, arrange themselves in single file and march along a sinuous route in rhythm with the dirge, which repeats from low to high, low to high, low to high, or else it stays low, a vibration, an ohm emanating from their mouths as they march. They pass a wheelbarrow full of fallen leaves and take a handful and shove leaves into their mouths and muffle their ohm and masticate as they march, or else they cut yet living leaves from rhododendron or salmonberry or vine maple or fern and masticate as they moan and march. One of their number from another wheelbarrow scoops tan clay sludge to douse, to paint each excessively beige, and they spit the leaves ground to shards, to pulp into a great

dollar bills used as tinder for a fire, a feigned fornication, a prolonged blowing of a bugle, the sitting down to dinner, the animated conversations, the hammering of nails, the screwing of screws, the wrenching, the writing, the striving, the groping of one another, the grasping, the eating of a worm, an indifferent death. But the man on the pedestal does not betray emotion.

earthen bowl and chew and spit and chew and spit, and over days the leaf pulp ferments, and those who have not been chewing leaves arrange the pulp shards painstakingly in a fine lattice, like stone masons, upon which the fungus grows, the fungus they cultivate to feed their larvae, their young, to whom they are obliged, who will grow into them --

You get ahead of yourself. It grows a little overwhelming. It or they runs or run far afield so quickly. I understand, these things take time. As the one documenting you, your experience, he outside of the moment would ask, why the excessively beige, why not simply clowns, it's all rather busy, but still I do not doubt you. I do believe you are getting somewhere, I do. I understand the need to feel as if you have done something, the right thing. We have done much today. And it's beginning to feel late in the day for doing; I require my rest.

January 26

After years of feeding the fungus and feeding off the fungus, they grow into themselves.

They stop and turn their eyes to you. They stop everything but the low pulse emanating from their throat. They stop their ceaseless march winding through the towering latticework they've constructed to support the fecund fungus, pyramid structures reaching to the sky and structures growing larger on the inside than the outside, sticks lashed together, dripping of fungus, and gaze at the audience, at their people, at each other, at you, and they pulse their voice and they clap their hands and stomp their feet, and the waterbearer materializes out of the twilight with a bucket of water (yet salinated) and dumps it over a performer as they gaze into you as another member of the audience scrubs and washes off the beige, and with another bucket another person sponges off the clown -- materializes, she doesn't materialize, she is not a phantasm,

an illusion, she is a person who has been going up and down the hill all this time hauling water. She laves water onto the next of you who used to be watching alongside you. They clap and stomp and stare at the audience. You are the only one left in the audience. You are the audience. All of you. The rest of the audience, those who are not doing the washing, the laundry, the scrubbing, the singing, have formed a human chain from here down the hill to the sea, passing full buckets up the hill and empty buckets down, forming a loop, a stretched circle, an ellipse, heaving up a river of saltwater in which to do the washing, a river of tears if you want to be so heavy-handed. The hands scrub heavy at first and then gentle, and each of them once washed stands and claps and stomps and pulses their voicebox and stares into you through you at all of you, naked, they are naked before you and their eyes are inside you, cleansed and exposed and the river of tears trickles back to the sea and in unison they cease to stomp and clap and chant, and they say:

January 27

You, the homeless, the destitute, tear down the mansions, decimate the self-reinforcing power structures.

You burn.

They wait. Their gaze inhabits you. As they wait, their eye in you gains life, awakens, you don't know, perhaps is Frankensteined, perhaps merely achieves cellular reproduction, perhaps through the vehicle of language the eye attains self-awareness. You step forward in rhythm with the vocal pulse that is no longer there, here, but is in your ear, and grasp a fungal scaffold seeing their eyes lighten in your mind and you don't know what you want, you want

to please them, what should you do, tear it down, yes that is what they want, Abandon mine and thine, and they light a dollar bill on fire, the tinder, they can spare no more, even for symbology, and hand it to you to coax and give breath and nurture a flame with a handful of old man's beard, witch's hair, dead brown pine needles, dry skinnings of logs, leafless twigs. Lattices alight. Pyres burn around you. Eyes shine. People pulse. In the air, in your ears, in your mind. Flames rear high into the very late afternoon early night sky. They do not dissipate or augment or have any discernible effect on the stars.

January 27

You awake in the mud alone.

Good afternoon.

Good afternoon.

Good afternoon.

Or rather, "Good afternoon," no punctuation, no exclamation mark or question mark or period, not even the comma that's there, in spite of the grammarians rule about where to shove the comma (up inside the quotation marks, those floating commas which shouldn't be there either). *Good afternoon* (where are we going, no need for speed) Good afternoon is scrawled in the mud, as if carved with a stick, or else is voiced in sticks laid atop the mud spelling Good Afternoon (title capitalization) or else the salutation is expressed in lurid orange and probably purple clay smeared on your person, GOOD AFTERNOON (an architect or else engineer here with their all caps) astride, no, aside, next to an arrow. ===> The arrow is wordless, but you know what it means, what all arrows mean. That Way or that way or THAT WAY, further on, what you seek is a little further on, that direction, the treasure is over there, a bit deeper in the woods, over the hill, around the bend, insert whatever treasure comes to mind.

They are all gone. They've left no trace except the churned forest floor and trampled grasses and pulverized brush and the signage on in of the mud. And you. How they transported their tents, their fires, their cauldron, the wagon, you don't know. They had backs, but they're not mules. Maybe their mules were ranging in the forest and they wrangled them in the early morning -- you haven't had a morning in I don't know how long, maybe 10 days. Perhaps the mules slipped past you. You're not very observant, when you're passed out in the mud. I cannot be expected to catch everything. I have only your eyes to work with, excepting your other sensory organs, being your ears and nose and tongue and mouth and all your skin, all the outside of you that feels, including that skin

which is contiguous with your inside, the outside of you which is inside.

You tore down a city. He did. Don't distance yourself. You burned it. Only in effigy. Only in mind. Except for the edifices and infrastructure and sewers, cities only exist in the mind. They trained you; they coerced you; they hoodwinked you. They did not hoodwink you. They did, but They is a different they. They showed you, took off the mask, pulled back the veil. They changed your mind, but nobody can change your mind but you. It was all a little theatrical, I'll grant you that, but here you are.

My brain is not me; it is you.

I wrote that. But why bequeath you so much? He wrote that. My brain is not me, but my mind is all of me. Even the parts I want to give away, donate, scrap, toss on the trasheap for you to salvage, the parts I want to foist, to clothe you in, I want to pretend are not there, I want to pretend, are me. Pretend. This is not pretend. You burn, decimate, tear down a pretend city in my mind, in your mind, in all our minds. The city is not pretend, the city is contingent on our concept of the city in our minds, on our perception of the relationships between one another, on our sense of the reciprocity we owe and ought.

The pretend is pretense. The pretend is absurd, ridiculous, fiction, makebelieve, hooey. Even hokey. I give you that. But the pretend is not pretend.

You are merely the I that is doing, outside in the world. Merely is the wrong word. The wrong qualifier. From one angle, from a wide dispersion of angles, the doing is all there is. From those points of observation, you are all, you and what you do -- you are what you do, you are what I do, and the rest is merely words.

Words, words, words. Fuck me with the quotes, I can't stop other people's words from leaking through the membrane. People's or peoples'? There's surely a rule; there always is; look it up in a book.

Something you should be doing. Something he has done. Something she will do. Something they need. Something I want. And it is as ever getting later and later in the day to do something.

Everything I've ever done worth doing I've done to survive. To stay alizz

I wrote that, so why the italics?

What Camus didn't say about Sisyphus is you, I, he has to be pushing something other than that goddamn rock up that goddamn hill, he has to be, or else you have to imagine he is, pretend he is, not just pretend -- that's the point -- make the rock into something more than a rock, change it with your mind, or what's the point?

Though if you go too far down into the point, you get dead. As if crushed by a falling rock.

Jesus, all this bullshit about me, as if I'm writing a diary. I am taking field notes on what he's done, what you're doing, what they do, it would seem, and what she will do, apparently.

You stand in the mud, alone under the sun of high noon. There is no high sun in January in this corner of the world and it is cloudy besides. You are out of doors. You live close to the bone. You get hungry in the afternoon.

January 28, later

He was forever in deciding.

He decided perhaps the common house sparrow is the most becoming of songbirds.

Becoming is my word. His wordthought was beautiful. Sometimes I feel the need to … I don't know what. I leave it up to you, another version of me, to elucidate my behavior, as I note and annotate yours.

I do feel as if a great burden has been lifted from my (dare I say it) (it hurts) soul. Perhaps since, sense, because in the end he decided. You left. You are gone. You are going.

But he was forever in it.

January 29

Good afternoon.

It is not the afternoon. Oh, the gamesmanship. What a pleasure.

There are the birds, yes yes, there they are, they are. Still alive, still kicking, still singing. Probably not the same birds anymore, upon your reading, but, you know. It's hard to deny a grackle hogging the suet.

Suet. A good word, suet. As a thing, I don't know. But as a word.

I read this just yesterday:

Ord, Toby. "The Precipice: Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity, 2020.

This book argues that safeguarding humanity's future is the defining challenge of our time.

It, the book, furthermore argues for a new ethical perspective, which, Jesus, I'm all for, but the ethical perspective we currently possess, operate under, attempt to maintain, seems too much for us already.

Nevermind, just shit people say. Altruism. What are you supposed to do about it. Put food on the table.

It's not, *I think, therefore I am*, but *I am where I thin*k. In which case, where am I?

I'm here; I'm not here. I'm not at home, I'm at a place that may as well be home, that's not the point. The point is, your thoughts are not your own; they are determined by the thoughts of those around you. You are who you are because of who is and has been around you, the constellation of thoughts in your heavens, vault, vicinity. How they shape you.

Of course, one day, everyday, you wake up. Until one day you don't wake up, and days no longer exist, not for you.

There are birds. What am I supposed to do with that?

January 31

I do not remember writing those words. I remember the act of writing, the moving of the pen, the dark and the rising light, or else the other way around. I don't remember having thoughts behind the action.

Of course our thoughts and values come to be from our society, relationships, family, the city in our mind. But we walk around in tangible cities on the ground, where our actions precipitate, are chosen, decohere, choose a metaphor (one of them might be right), the inherited thought, and isn't it us in between, in between the inheritance and the act, and are we not as individuals responsible for action or inactions. We are the connection between the inheritance and the creation, the past and the future, the outside and the inside.

We are in between. We are the membrane.

So what.

I don't mean we are skin.

I do want to know, who was that in my skin writing those words? Does he talk about me? Does he do what's right?

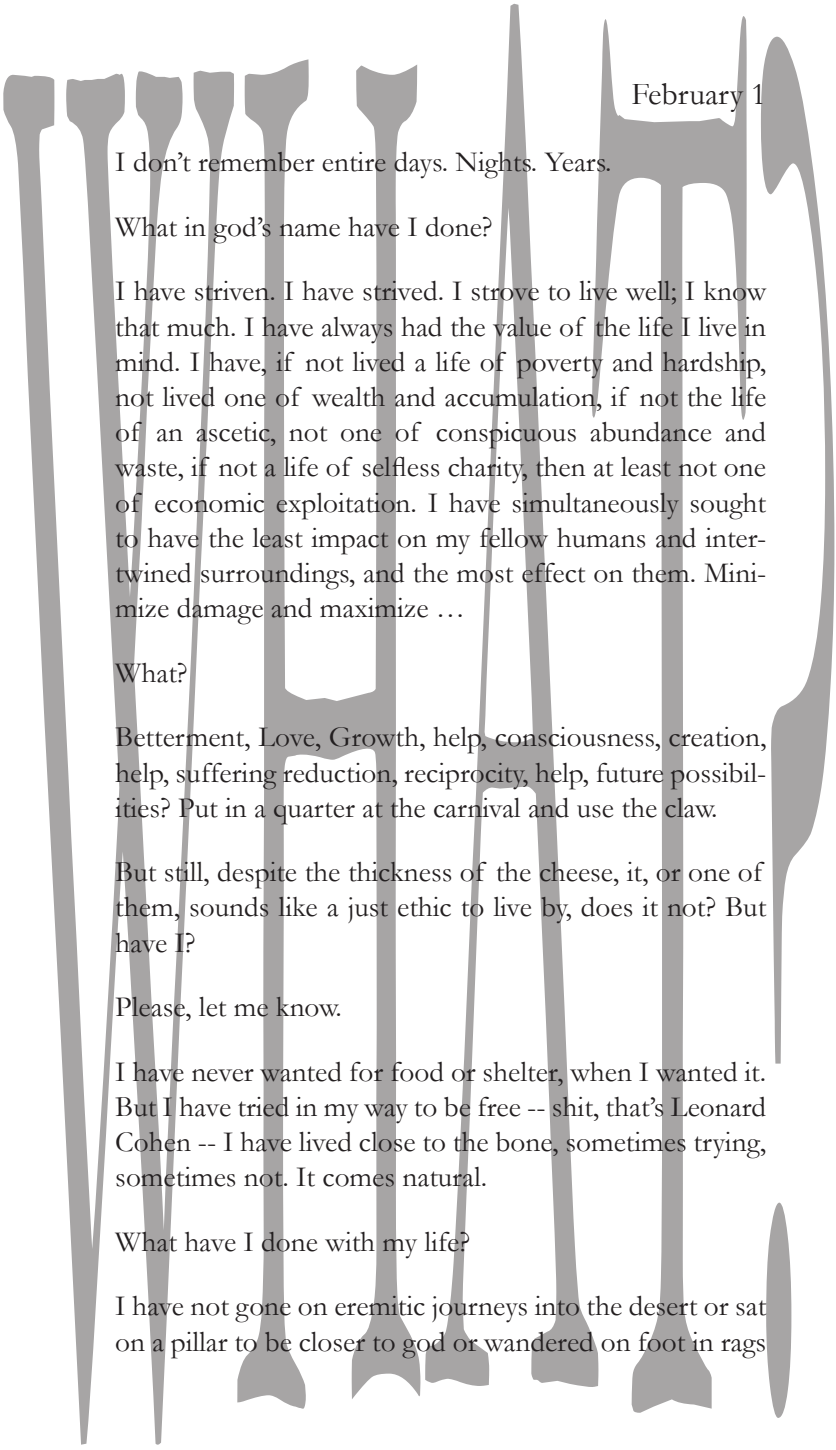
Because of course there are rhinoceri and elephants too (the ones we haven't killed, extincted, ground to powder or used to adorn ourselves or prevented from walking the miles they must or caused to not want to live in the surroundings we've left them). There are birds who eat the bugs off their backs.

I try to balance such inquiry with moments of levity such as

Doing is nothing, nothing is doing

while I learn to not think of thinking. Not think about comma usage. Birds eat bugs off backs. A tidy bit of mutualism.

And who are you, out there in my skin, going about? What are you doing in it, and why?



February 1

I don't remember entire days. Nights. Years.

What in god's name have I done?

I have striven. I have strived. I strove to live well; I know that much. I have always had the value of the life I live in mind. I have, if not lived a life of poverty and hardship, not lived one of wealth and accumulation, if not the life of an ascetic, not one of conspicuous abundance and waste, if not a life of selfless charity, then at least not one of economic exploitation. I have simultaneously sought to have the least impact on my fellow humans and intertwined surroundings, and the most effect on them. Minimize damage and maximize …

What?

Betterment, Love, Growth, help, consciousness, creation, help, suffering reduction, reciprocity, help, future possibilities? Put in a quarter at the carnival and use the claw.

But still, despite the thickness of the cheese, it, or one of them, sounds like a just ethic to live by, does it not? But have I?

Please, let me know.

I have never wanted for food or shelter, when I wanted it. But I have tried in my way to be free -- shit, that's Leonard Cohen -- I have lived close to the bone, sometimes trying, sometimes not. It comes natural.

What have I done with my life?

I have not gone on eremitic journeys into the desert or sat on a pillar to be closer to god or wandered on foot in rags

surviving on only what I could beg or fasted without food in the wilderness on a vision quest. But I have spent time in the desert alone and sat atop mountains crying at the sun alone and not known how I would pay at the end of the month and lived on the verge, a privileged handout away from the soup line. I've eaten with the Hare Krishnas. I have lived in the wilderness. I have known a place, alone and together, endured weather, rain dust heat lightning snow sunsets mud, death. I have climbed mountains to … what. Not to conquer them. Not to bag them. But, perhaps, to know them, to be them, in some insignificant way.

He did those things, before he moved inside. Before you left. What does it, did it, has it mattered?

There have been privileges, indulgences, excesses. Plenty of excesses. And privileges, he'd have been gutter bound without them. And yet, I am only, at this significant age, for the first time going to break the thirty-thousand dollar income threshold in the purportedly most advanced country, society, culture, (ha ha), economy in history. I'll show you my taxes. I'm an open book. And I have my responsibilities.

Look at this self-promotion laced with self-loathing! Even an exclamation mark to boot for both!

Still I eat and sleep and drink and shit and do nothing for most of the afternoon.

What has he done?

Dear diarrhea, I cannot recall.

I shit and I stink, I'm real, join the club
I'd stop and talk, but I'm already in love

(Ibid, Vedder, 1994. {Wash, rinse, repeat.})

There was a time, almost three years ago, when he couldn't get out. I remember it like it was yesterday (that's not true) like the day before yesterday (truer, maybe) like the day before the day before yesterday (I don't remember the day before the day before yesterday) (so truer yet). Choose a day. May Day, 2020, IWW Day, 2020, both highly unlikely to be the objectively correct day, as if that means anything. It was whatever day I attest to, and you accept. He could have been busy in the garden on either said day in the long light on the shoulder of summer. He needed to be out, out of the house, out of the city, out of his mind. But he was unable; it wasn't permitted; he couldn't get out. Trapped, cloistered, confined -- I remember the feeling because I feel it still. You have gone but I'm still right here (Reznor and Cash), couldn't go but he needed space, to breathe, space to leave his mind, a shelf to put his thoughts, so he cut holes in the walls (where is the garden?), avoiding load-bearing members and pipes of ingress and egress, the clean and the foul, and largely avoiding the conduits of electricity. He cut holes in the walls of the stairs; he cut holes in the false walls above the kitchen cabinets; he repurposed a pre-existing hole in the wall of the hall to make a tiny stage. (I must get out.) He toenailed in screws to secure shelves and exposed the inside of the walls where the mice run and rained gypsum drywall. On the shelves he put jars of shells, a skull, books, a box head, a glass orb, a spider plant, his thoughts, painted rocks, a something -- a lamb perhaps he said -- crocheted by an itinerant in the neighborhood, horse nippers, a gourd. He tried to make more space on the inside than on the outside. He searched for a shelf in the walls to place himself.

That's neither a story nor a garden, but there you are.

February 2

Before you, beneath you, in the mud is an arrow made of sticks. ⇒ Alongside it, below it, below you, within you is scrawled, *This way to the treasure.*, in not so many words. In no words. You don't know how it got there -- you do; they did it while you were passed out in the mud, in the nowhere, in the gutter. You don't know how you don't know how they made the arrow beneath you, if they rolled you over without rousing you and subsequently rolled you back, or if they deftly inserted the sticks under you from the side through the mud hovering in the liquid-solid phase change with inadequate squelch from their boots to alert you, or by some other means you'll think up later. But more importantly for you is that you do not know if the referent of the unworded insinuation of the stick arrow is rainbow, sun, or moon.

But he did decide at one observable, capturable, attainable, explicable point or another, a point for which I am still on the hunt, to go. And so here you are, setting off, following the arrow, or rather continuing in the direction the arrow points (the arrow stays put) through the towering trees.

That is nice. The trees are towering. What is worthy of our attention? Of note taking, and thinking on said notes?

Towering trees? I? You?

You are doing a provocative thing, going, but I don't know why I am enunciating you to you as you do it.

Oh yes, it's for the record. To try and figure a thing out. For a future me, it seems, who I'm just beginning to differentiate as she.

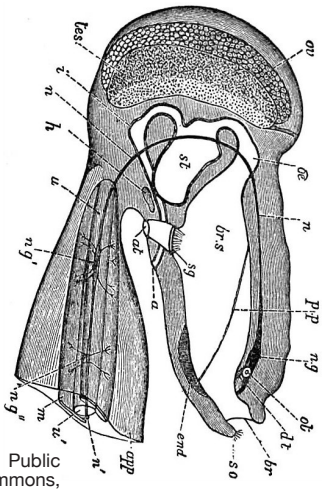
I enunciate you to me, desperate to understand. I expose myself to you, desperate for your understanding. But it is, from a certain point of view, masturbatory. An assault, even, without consent. Will that be her point of view?

Perhaps in the act of reading, you, she, I give consent. Perhaps the act of reading is the act of consenting. I don't want to put words in your mouth. And I don't want to unintentionally expose you in the act of exposing me.

In my mouth on the other hand, I could stand to shove a foot.

So I leave here an amalgamation of others' words:

> In the world, in the sea, is a creature called a larvacean, a fist-sized glowing orb that excretes a net-like cloud of mucus from its head, which inflates to the size of a trash bag, the cloud mucus house not the head. The house filters out large particles that could clog the larvacean's digestive system, at least until the head discards the house (why -- because the filter is dirty, or clogged, or the shelf-life of the membrane has been reached, or because the mucus is breaking down, or because the release is a form of excretion, or because this contribution is how it has achieved a balance with its dark aquatic environment?), after which it will be consumed by scavengers.



William Abbott Herdman, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, 1911.

February 3

And now (Good afternoon, with toilet paper shoved up my nose to staunch the leak) you really must be going. There is no other explanation for this sickness unto death (that's what you said, *I really must be going*.), but ascetic self-flagellation, self-denial, self-imposed misery (or did I say it, *You really must be going*.) so I can be alone in my suffering. There is no other explanation in other words for my nose but you. They say misery loves company, but in my experience it's a lie, an old wive's tale, a proverb. You say you already went. Well fine, but it is hard to tell. I did not choose to feel this miserable. Perhaps it is an outwardly imposed penitence, but who is outside this journal to impose anything? (Who could be imposing?, the elephants?, too busy reading the news; the rhinoceri?, too engaged in stampeding; the humans in their cages on their screens watching, gaming, being entertained?) But I'll concede that perhaps the self-compound words are an unintentional misdirection.

Nevertheless, someday he said, I will go.

Nevertheless, someday she will have said, I went.

Nevermind, You go.

You follow the arrow. The arrow stays; you go. You go in the direction the arrow indicates, imposes, deeper into the forest, the wood, the towering trees. What has it been, 3 weeks since you showered? Don't worry about it; I'm keeping the field notes.

You follow the wanderers. They don't cover their tracks, footprints, hoofprints, wagonwheel prints, prints cloven and uncloven. Time passes. You pass apple orchards where women stoop, bend, crawl picking the grounders,

red yellow green. You pass fields where women pick through mounds of blemished or forked or enormous over-mature woody-hearted carrots (purple yellow orange), of potatoes too large or too small or too compromised (purple yellow red), of tomatoes with top rot or bottom rot or scab (red orange yellow black green), of lettuce and spinach and arugula (green) infested with slugs and earwigs, of kale and collards and broccoli (green purple) infested with aphids, of heads of cabbage (purple green red) infested with slugs and aphids. You pass beaches where women pick oysters ripped loose by storm You do not concern yourself with storm or season or the arrow of time. She hands you an apple. You eat around the bruise. It's a little soft, but still palatable. An apple maggot rears out of the core. She is here too, the water bearer. You ask her,

-- Why are they all women?

-- They?

-- Yes, them.

-- Why are we all women?

-- Ok, why are we all women?

-- It is the right of the widows to glean.

-- But in that case, why are you here?

-- I am a widow.

-- I thought the man --

-- The man is Mr. Burneau. He is a rogue, a troubadour, a minstrel.

-- He's a music maker.

-- He busks.

-- I would like to meet him.

-- We are all widows here. Have a carrot.

-- Thank you. They --

-- We.

-- We have a lot to carry.

-- That's why we only take what we can use and leave the rest. Right?

(Pause.)

-- Right. (Pause.) But do they … do we have enough?

-- *Cultivation is rarely just about calories.* Are you still hungry?

-- A little.

-- Best get on with it then. Shoulder your load. We must get to wherever the Turtles and Wolves and Elk and Hawk are foraging or farming or whatever they're calling it before the afternoon is out.

-- Who are we?

-- Among us are them, and also others. I'm a Bear. And you, by the look of you, are a Racoon.

-- What's that supposed to mean?

-- Nothing. It has nothing to do with looks. Except you do have the telltale dark circles around the eyes. Come on,

they're less likely to find us if we don't stay in one place too long.

-- Who, vagabonds?

-- That is like three questions too many. No, we are not concerned with the vagabonds. Now shake a leg, saddle up, hitch your wagon, and let's go. It's just a little farther on.

February 4

Leeks are the kind of vegetable that take care of themselves; their bulbing reproduction cannot be stopped. Leaks of the mucal variety often also take care of themselves, and will stop of their own accord when given enough time. Other types of leaks, such as a dripping faucet, occasionally fix themselves temporarily, but in general tend to worsen and accelerate over time, like the expansion of the universe. My kitchen faucet has been dripping for perhaps 5 years as of this writing. My nose has been leaking for nearly 48 hours. The universe has been expanding for about 13.8 billion years. Leeks have taken over a corner of the garden previously dedicated to kale and the like. Furthermore, I make potato-leek soup once a year in April (I have my reasons), which it is not yet, though it has been previously, and will presumably be again.

You from the future tell me what it means, please. Has April happened? Has it come and gone, again?

The leeks are foraged from my garden; the potatoes are harvested.

Something is bleeding somewhere. Everywhere. Where. I can taste the iron. I can't taste their on. I can smell it. I can feel it in my bones. I, he characterized the profiteers as leeches conforming to us, but that's not quite right, or not all of it, or only one facet. We, we are the ones who apply the leeches for misbegotten medical purposes, who apply what the leeches make, what they ooze, the plastics and the pleasures and the anticoagulants and the games and the blood thinners and the simulations of real life and their mindset of lack. We apply their products, their soft bodies, to our skins. ~~We apply the leeches to staunch our wounds.~~

Off which they feed.

And so you, as me, that's pretty rich, pretty presumptuous, you aren't me if nothing else, a bleeding heart on your high horse ride around the next bend and enter the encampment on your own two feet -- at dusk -- a sack of apples on your back -- near a river. Children emerge from a blackberry bramble with buckets of blackberries -- scamper down from piñon trees with satchels of pine nuts -- rise from snuffling in the earth with whatever receptacle you prefer full of mushrooms. The fishermen are done fishing and are walking up from the river, the day's catch dangling over their shoulders. The salmon must be running. Perhaps somewhere hidden -- behind the bramble would be a good spot -- a plot of grain -- whatever's easiest -- perhaps corn -- casting a wide net there -- grows.

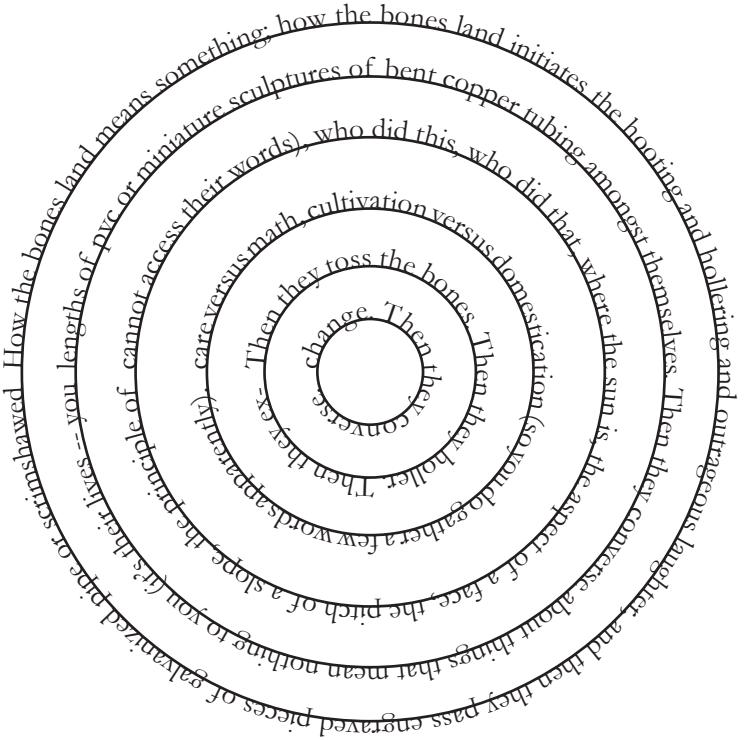
The fires are being lit. A fiddle is bowed -- the first trill of evening -- a guitar strummed -- a mouth harp blown.

With the other women you take your haul to a common area at the center of the encampment centered around a pile and trade amongst yourselves what you've gathered -- a pile of metal plastic paper and who knows what the trash pickers have carried back from the dump -- a pile we peruse.

February 5

ROGUE
1934 - present

The apple gleaner takes you by the elbow and leads you to a circle of women sitting cross-legged or crouching or kneeling like supplicants (not like supplicants, I couldn't absent myself, I'm sorry), shouting, cheering, jeering, laughing. They throw bird bones into circles within circles within their circle.


How the bones land means something: how the bones land initiates the hooting and hollering and outrageous laughter, and then they pass engraved pieces of galvanized pipe or scrimshawed -- you lengths of pvc or miniature sculptures of bent copper tubing amongst themselves. Then they converse about things that mean nothing to you (it's their lives -- cannot access their words), who did this, who did that, where the sun is, the aspect of a face, the pitch of a slope, the pendulum care versus math, cultivation versus domestication (so you do gather a few words apparently) Then they toss the bones. Then they holler. Then they exchange. Then they converse.

Then they toss the bones. Then they holler. Then they exchange. Then they converse.

The apple gleaner interrupts --

-- Sorry to interrupt your game ladies, but I have a middle-aged female raccoon here in need of a place to stay and something to eat.

-- It sure looks like it.

-- Who amongst you is a raccoon?

-- I am.

-- Very well then. I'll leave you to it.

She goes, and a woman who looks nothing like you stands and offers her stump. You sit on it. The first stars come out. Mars is not far behind. The women take the opportunity to pause and ladle soup from a pot simmering over a nearby fire. The raccoon woman hands you a bowl -- broth -- potatoes and carrots and onions and parsnips -- perhaps leeks -- herbs -- rosemary, sage, thyme -- stray chunks of meat and cartilage and bone -- probably ptarmigan or pheasant or grouse -- and asks,

-- So, where are you from?

-- The city.

-- Oh my.

-- Do you not like it there?

-- It's just

It scares me.

-- Well there are a lot of destitute on the streets, which can be intimidating, and you have to take care, but most people are well-meaning, if perhaps mentally disabled or substance addled or otherwise unwell, and you should --

-- Yes, their unwellness is fostered, but that is not what scares me. What scares me is you are only allowed to move in prescribed ways. That, and it is nigh impossible to see the night sky.

-- Ah. That is true. What scares me are the rhinoceri and pigs, and the leeches, and the people in cages, and even, at my lowest, the elephants.

-- That sounds like almost everybody.

-- Yes, yes it does. Even I guess who I now know as raccoons, meaning the me's, scare me. I do give more leeway to the mad and the elderly and the mentally ill and the criminal and the orphaned and the incarcerated (that's easy because they're in cages) and the derelict and the disabled and the nomadic and the wandering (both harder because they are excessively mobile) and the untoward.

-- That is nice of you, honey.

-- Or I try to.

-- You don't have to eat me out to eat my soup.

-- Oh I'm sorry, I didn't mean --

-- Enough. We are Raccoons. I am the soup maker.

-- Ok. I don't know who I am.

-- That is so cheesy I can't believe you uttered it.

-- I'm sorry.

-- We neither have enough dairy for cheese nor time for apologies. You'll have to milk one of the men's goats for that route. I barely believe in keeping them. Better than cows though, by a mile. Keep eating.

-- Mmhmm.

-- You will tell us you are the note taker. The record keeper. The observer.

-- Mmhmm.

-- See the stars.

-- Mmhmm.

-- How did you get out?

-- By the skin of my teeth.

-- Eh?

-- At some point, perhaps in the future, I made a choice.

-- I misspoke. The mechanics do not concern me. Why did you get out?

-- I am in search of a moon to lasso, a rainbow to ride, a sun to walk into.

-- Okay. You are a character in a young adult novel.

~~-- They are some of the best books.~~

February 6

-- It's the malaise.

-- The ennui.

-- The depression.

-- The,

What now?

-- The

Now what?

-- The What's the point?

-- The funk.

-- Tell me about it.

-- I'm trying.

-- You're not trying very hard.

-- It's so boring.

-- It is certainly cliché.

-- What do you do about it?

-- Me? I don't get it.

-- Goddamnit.

-- I find things to take care of.

-- I fondle words like cheese and cliché and ham.

-- How does that make you feel?

-- I'm just the

just the observer, the Note Taker.

-- You should talk to Mr. Bruneau. He says he gets it. He calls it the blues. You two can cheese it up together.

-- The phrase is ham it up.

-- As in pigs. I suppose now you're going to say something about raisins.

-- Porpoises.

-- He says things like,

You gotta keep on keeping on.

She calls his name into the night. After a minute, a man about your age -- receding hairline -- full beard -- a man somewhere between fit and unfit -- a dad's body -- leathered by miles -- wanders over. In his beard is a hole. The hole is his mouth.

-- You called, Soup Maker.

-- Yes, Mr. Burneau. Share a song with us.

He looks at a point in the night sky, some star perhaps, or Jupiter, or an empty space of dark matter or virtual particle formation. He picks his guitar or strums his banjo or fiddles his fiddle in a blues progression or bluegrass tune or bayou thing and opens his hole. He sings a song in a gravelly voice, a song about how difficult it is to get health insurance or file your taxes or leap through the Kafkian bureaucratic hoops -- the proper forms, wait on hold a day, permanent address, be online, be in line, the necessary wifi to register for, to claim, your benefits for you or your dependents or whoever you are responsible for, or even to obtain a document licensing you as a real person, no permanent address -- seasonal work -- migrant work -- itinerant work -- pick the fields, fish the seas, clear the

trails, detassle the corn, pick apples, plant trees, pick blueberries -- or how when you stay in one place too long you feel the walls ossifying, the doors coagulating, the abode in rigor mortis, the coffin closed and lowered and clods of dirt thumping down and darkness.

The song ends.

February 6, later

Leathered by miles, a deft touch of mine. Though you just as easily could have been tethered by miles, or feathered by miles.

I don't know why Mr. Burneau had to be, has to be, is a warped reflection.

You chide me at your expense.

But it's at my expense I tell you.

And is that really why you go in pursuit of the rainbow moon sun? The blues?

I am not Mr. Burneau. I am you, gone. I will be she.

Is that how he left? Why he decided? Was he blue?

February 7

I can only imagine that interrupting your experience does not qualify as interesting for you. Apologies.

-- Good afternoon, ma'am.

-- A little late for that.

-- Not from where I'm standing.

-- That's perplexing. It's dark, and you were recently gazing deep into the night sky.

-- From my vantage, the sun has yet to set.

-- Quite optimistic.

-- I don't know about that.

-- I hear you're a rogue.

-- I'm a Wolf. And a song hunter.

-- Do you find many songs around here?

-- No, ma'am. I hunt in Acadia, Lafayette, Iberia, thereabouts. And most of the songs have been sung and died out, sad to say.

-- Due to the hunting.

-- No no, my hunting preserves. I am attempting to create the most extensive document of rural oral poetry and vernacular musical style from times gone by.

-- I'm from the city.

-- I know, miss. I've been.

-- Does it not hold any attraction for you?

-- In spells. The tumult, the swirl of humanity, the crux of civilization. Then I must take my leave.

-- Was that a song you captured?

-- Recorded in my mind, you mean. But no, it's an original.

-- Ah. I'd like to hear a song you hunted.

I interject. I want to hear more about he's sad to say, how he journeys and hunts, who he's met and who he's not, ribald tales of destitutes taking a stand and how he persists with the blues, tales of robbing from the rich and giving to the poor, of revolution one non-compliance at a time, of principles of freedom and principles of care, of pushing the rock up the hill, how he keeps on keeping on whilst maintaining his stance as an ethical being.

-- I don't know, miss.

He demurs, but you insist.

-- I insist.

-- If you insist, then very well. Something like:

February 8

Oh one of these mornings, bright and fair
I'll run my wings and try the air
Just watch the sun, see how she runs
Don't ever let her catch you with the work undone
I ain't gonna grieve no more

They come to my house, and they talk about you
They go to your house, and they talk about me
You may talk about me just as much as you please
I'll talk about you down on my knees
I ain't gonna grieve no more

1934, recorded by John and Alan Lomax, collected in "Traditional Music in Coastal Louisiana: The 1934 Lomax Recordings, by Joshua Clegg Caffery, Baton Rouge, LSU Press, 2013.

-- This song was sung by Ella Barney, of Crowley.

Yes, yes, that's the ticket, I applaud.

-- Very well sung, Mr. Burneau. But I was hoping for something a little more …

Non-conformist?, I suggest.

-- Ribald.

-- I see. I have recorded many such songs, but mind you, I am not accustomed to singing them in the company of a lady.

Come all pretty fair maids, take warning from me
Don't never trust a jolly boy an inch above your knee
He'll tumble you and screw you until he is done
And then he'll leave you for some other one
He'll roger you, fuck you, and talk mighty sweet
And then will kick your ass out in the street
Now girlies take a friendly tip from me

Don't never let a gleaner an inch above your knee

-- Yes, I quite enjoyed that. Who sang it?

Roger, wasn't it?, I pipe, or clench, or blush.

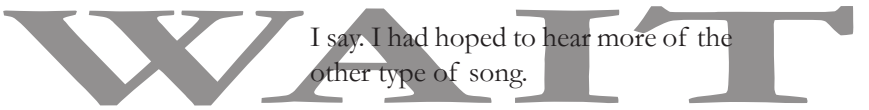
-- Mr. Burneau, my lady.

-- But you are Mr. Burneau.

-- They are all Mr. Burneau. There are many variations and remixes and samplings of *Inch Above Your Knee.* They are all sung by Mr. Burneau. The version I sang for you was recorded in my memory near Morse in 1934, by Mr. Burneau.

-- I see, Mr. Burneau. I would like to hear more of Mr. Burneau's songs, samplings from across the country and times gone by. And seeing as how we've finished our soup, and since you, Mr. Burneau, are unable to sing said songs in public near this fire encircled by eagles and bears and turtles and snakes and beavers under the cover of night, perhaps you could sing them to me elsewhere, somewhere without prying ears, one wolf to a raccoon.

-- By all means, my dear. My tent is --



I say. I had hoped to hear more of the other type of song.

-- What type again, Ma'am?

The, I don't know, the protest song, the song of the rebel or the outcast or the downtrodden.

-- Well there's always tomorrow, as I always say.

Tonight's the night. Neil Young said that. I'll let you be in my dream if I can be in yours. Bob Dylan said that.

-- I am the Song Hunter. What is it exactly you do, if I may inquire, miss?

I take note.

-- Expound, if you will.

I observe, and attempt to make sense.

-- Mean you meaning?

The purpose of an encyclopedia is to collect knowledge disseminated around the globe; to set forth its general system to the men with whom we live, and transmit it to those who will come after us, so the work of preceding centuries will not become useless to the centuries to come; and so that our offspring, becoming better instructed, will at the same time become more virtuous and happy, and that we should not die without having rendered a service to the human race.

Denis Diderot, 1755

February 9

-- Very noble, Ma'am. I can respect that. I even aspire to resemble it. Another Frenchman, I see. But it does sound like a pursuit for the afternoon, and now it is night. It is, if I may, time to sing.

There is a time to plant, and a time to plow --

-- Shh. I know where the moon lies, golden and full, poised to rise through the mist. This way, Miss.

You and I look up at the night sky -- full of stars -- and demure. We catch our breath. We look around -- the gamblers are gone, the fire flickers. We are alone.

-- I will sing you the songs of Mr. Burneau.

He offers you a hand, a gentleman, helping you to stand. You take it, rough and sure. You follow him into the dark. You leave me here, over my protestations (a song: *We need disruption to end the destruction / Your care product is our care problem*), but you aren't listening (*How long it has been since you showered!*). I don't know if my pleas are voiced and audible for you, in the place where you are, and I am not (*Please, don't leave me here.*), but they are here recorded by me alone (*My brain is not me; it is you.*). I wail, it says so, and thrash and beat my breast (*I will be your cheese, I will be your dog, I just want to maximize my life for the good of all, I want to leave as little trace as possible, I am desperate to do the least damage and the most good while sending you in my stead while I come along. Please don't leave me here, without you.*).

I pant.

I exhaust myself.

I settle.

You have gone with Mr. Burneau. You go into the dark. You have left me alone, next to the fire. The fire crackles, pops, sizzles. I stare into the orange waves. You have left me here. I attempt to lose myself.

February 10

It begins to rain. The rain washes away. I am cold. It stops raining. The morning will never come.

It began to rain. It rained. It stopped raining. All in one afternoon. Raindrops keep falling on my head, and all that. The plants will be happy. Whatever happiness means on the level of consciousness of plants, the little fuckers. Bulbs poking up already, out of doors, sticking their heads up ~~to get frost burned~~. (It doesn't frost while it's raining.)

What washes away, you ask. I ask. You're occupied. I don't know what. The layer of gray clay skinning my body, or the red paint on my skin demarcating my arteries, veins, capillaries, my blood flow, or the ink on the pages onto which I write myself, scribing another skin.

What a pile of horseshit. Obviously the rain does not wash away the ink of me because here I am. I am not in the rain, not bodily. I am home.

But the fire is out. And it is afternoon. And I am indeed alone. Except for the me reading this in the future. Perhaps she. Though I am trying to not perseverate too demonstrably on that.

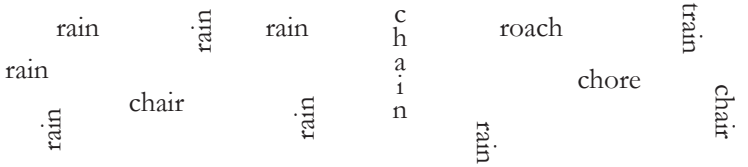
Burt Bacharach died yesterday, along with hundreds of thousands of other people, most of whom will be remembered by loved ones for a generation or two, and then forgotten.

A chair is still a chair
Even when there's no one sitting there
But a chair is not a house
And a house is not a home
When there's no one there to hold you tight
And no one there you can kiss goodnight

Burt Bacharach, 1964

And Hal David, whom he omitted for alliterative effect. Nov 24, 2024

If I say “chair,” what does it mean? If I say “chair,” what does it matter? Does it call a chair into being? Are you sitting? Am I? Is she? The you with Mr. Burneau is unlikely to be sitting. What if I say “rain,” or “roach”? ~~Are you sitting on Mr. Burneau?~~



Who cares. Shut up.

The things my responsibilities make me say. As if there will ever be another day.

And washed the spider

out.

Good morning.

Good afternoon.

Good night.

I dangle by the skin of my teeth, by the ribbons of the maypole, the sticks stuck in my chest dancing around the sun pole, sitting fast atop the totem pole, by words dissolving in the rain, by sweaty cheese.

What is the difference anyway between the rainbow and the moon? And the ever-exploding sun? They are different things, phenomena, whatever, fine, of course, shut up, but they are all glimmers in the eye. What is the difference in your pursuit of each. Can you not differentiate your desires. Do you search for three things, or one. Do you search for anything, or an amorphous blob, a no thing to fill a cavity within.

Let us dissect.

February 11

I never got around to it (the dissection) yesterday, apparently. What happened? I don't know … responsibilities, balls and hoops, popping crocuses, prancing poodles, raw fish, bad movies entertaining the mass of humanity (including me) and consuming hundreds of millions of dollars while the dehumanized puddle deboned on the sidewalk.

Let's try again to dissect, deconstruct, decompose. To understand your desire.

As objects, they are all light. Or that is how we perceive each of them -- light is how we perceive many, even most,

things. Nevertheless, the substance of each of these three objects of desire (note that the sun can be classified as a singular entity, as can the moon, a singular persisting phenomenon, but the rainbow is a non-object, intangible, an artifact of perception and angular position and point of view that occurs again and again and again in infinite iterations) is bound up from the human consciousness perspective with the visible spectrum of light (electromagnetic radiation).

The sun, to begin with the most obvious, is the churn and roil of light's creation (light is such a narrow bandwidth of the sun's emissions) -- try again. The sun is the fusion reaction converting hydrogen to helium, giving off as byproduct a wide swath of radiation, which both heats Earth and feeds plant life and enables our observation of the surrounding world (sight evolved in the biosphere: we open our eyes to admit light particles bouncing off every surface). The sun via its emissions is the origin of life. At least as we know it. In our solar system.

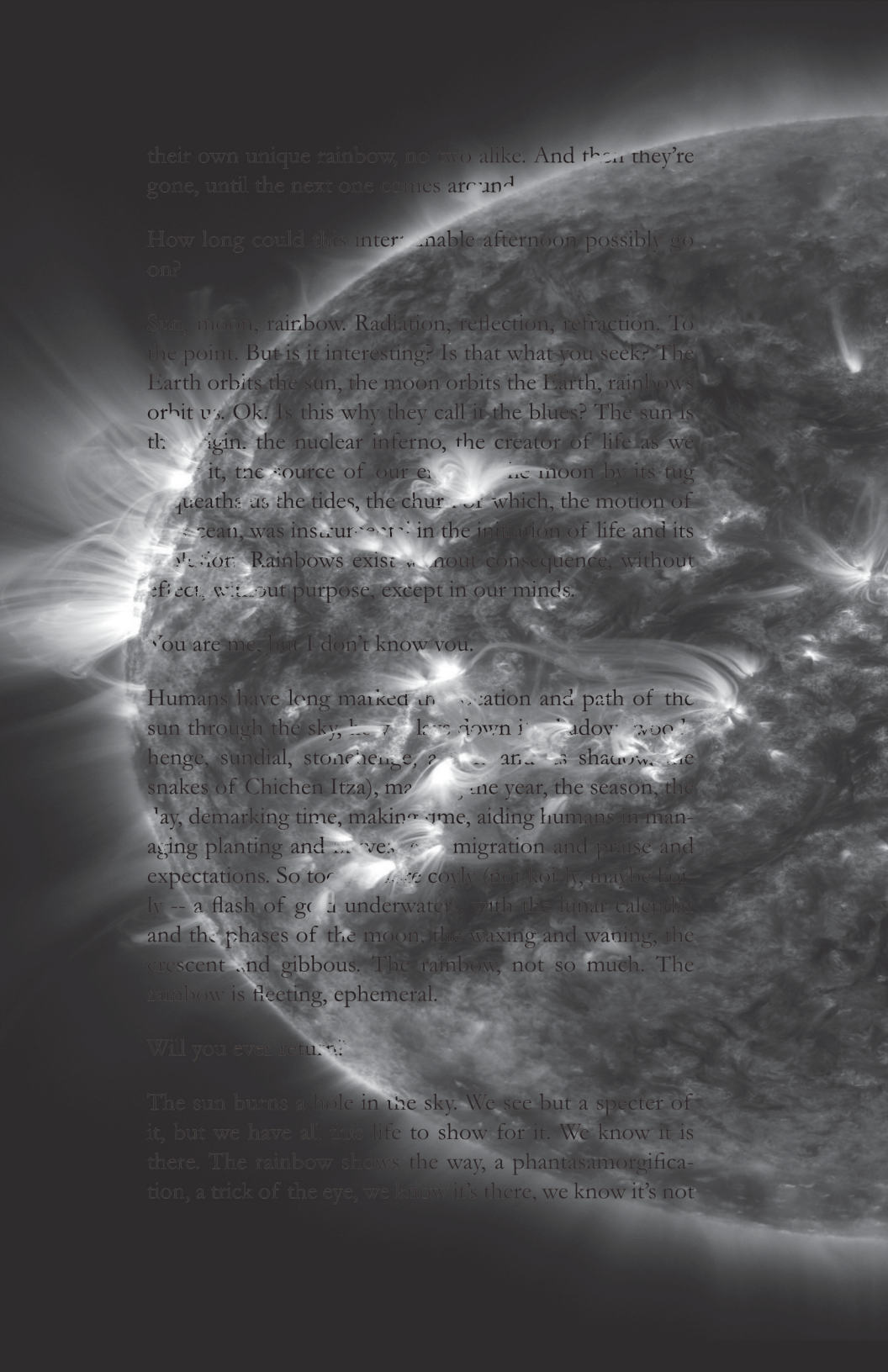
Move on or we'll never get anywhere.

The moon for us on the surface of our planet is a reflection of sunlight. The reflection is what gives it its face; without the reflection and bouncing light we wouldn't know it's there. So maybe it wouldn't be. (Forgive the tides for the moment -- perhaps also instrumental in the origins of life -- and the lunar effect on our orbit.) Nice and succinct, excellent.

A rainbow is a different thing, isn't it. *You can't touch a rainbow* is the folk wisdom. You can touch the moon (contrary to his previous point) -- well *you* can't, but people have, a handful, and perhaps you could if you applied yourself and sought to accomplish rather than fiddling. (Really in the contemporary timeframe it doesn't matter, you cannot

touch the moon, probability-wise we can round to zero, but perhaps in the future the moon touching situation will be different, easier, less restrictive. People have stood on the moon, I'm told, before I was born, and may do so again, after I die.) I could touch the sun, in theory, be the first to do so, as is one of my, his, your, stated desires, though I would ablate, ignite, vaporize, more, be converted to solar wind, more, atomized, more, be shred to protons and neutrons and stripped of electrons and pummeled into photons and melted into radiation before I succeeded. I would be light. Sounds like a bad mission statement. *I would be light.* An indecisive deity. A conditional god. Who's fooling, I couldn't handle the heat, and the surface of the sun isn't solid, is it, nor is it liquid, is it, a soup of atomic particles and emissions, right, isn't plasma involved, can a person touch that? There is an immense gray area involved, where even if one stood in one's kitchen, one would be uncertain if one were touching the sun or not.

On the other hand, with certainty, one cannot touch a rainbow. That's established, because it's all in our head. Like I can't touch you; you're all in my head. No, like I can't touch you, because I'm in your head. No, like I can't touch you because you're touching something else. No, like I can't touch you because you're me. Stop it. I only mean to be constructive. Not destructive. Where's the fun. It's all a matter of perception, of refraction, of one's point of observation and angle or light cone or parallax view, or somesuch, to the prismed light. A rainbow is light prismed by water in the air. Did you know that. Luckily this journal is only for my elucidation, so I don't insult your intelligence, only my own and future me's. Admittedly not insulting you is not much on my mind. ~~I do need something to do while you diddle with Mr. Burneau, play the piper, choose your own euphemism.~~ Everyone sees



their own unique rainbow, no two alike. And then they're gone, until the next one comes around.

How long could this interminable afternoon possibly go on?

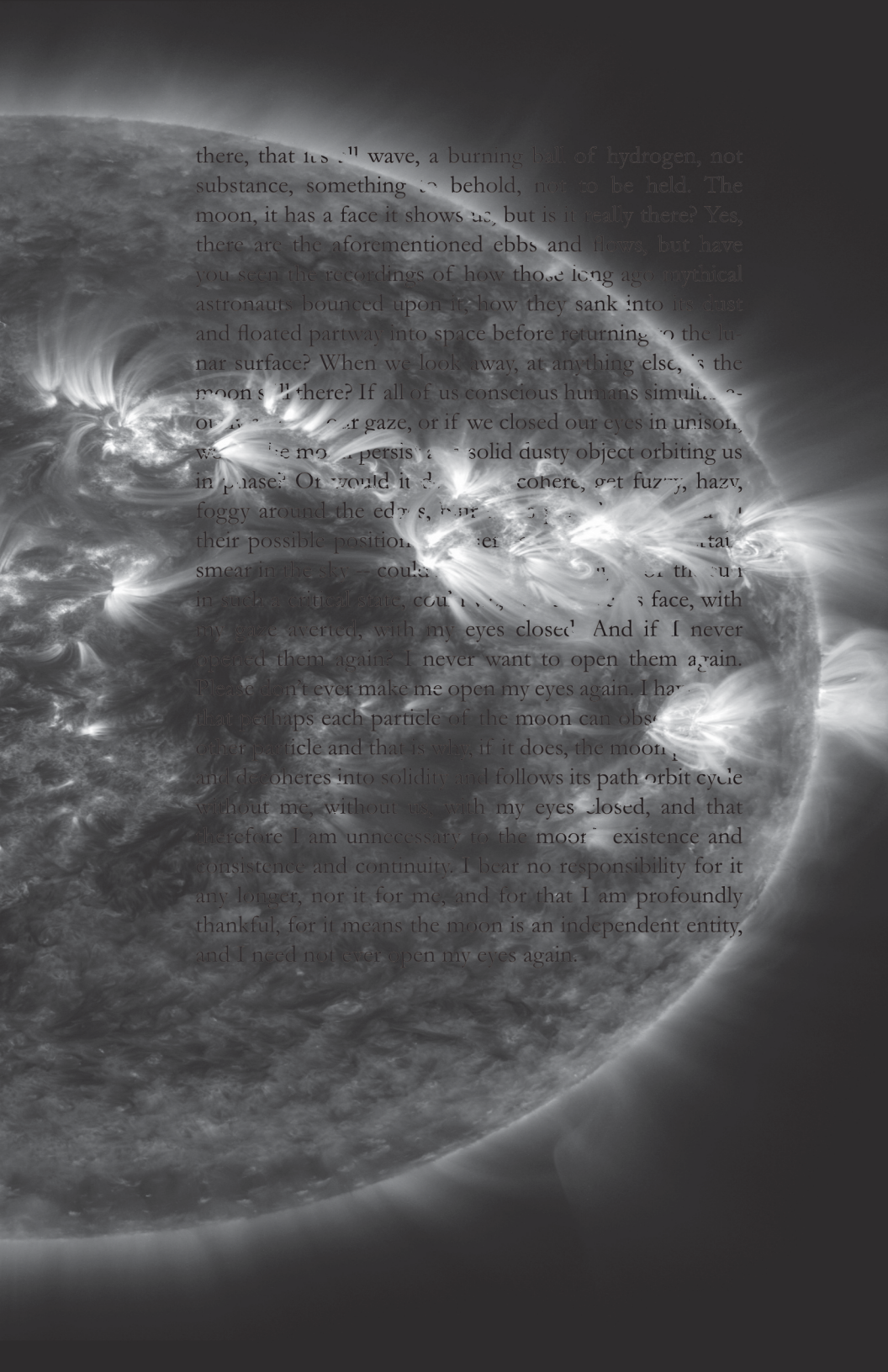
Sun, moon, rainbow. Radiation, reflection, refraction. To the point. But is it interesting? Is that what you seek? The Earth orbits the sun, the moon orbits the Earth, rainbows orbit us. Ok. Is this why they call it the blues? The sun is the origin, the nuclear inferno, the creator of life as we know it, the source of our existence, the moon by its tug bequeaths us the tides, the churning of which, the motion of the ocean, was instrumental in the initiation of life and its evolution. Rainbows exist without consequence, without effect, without purpose, except in our minds.

You are me, but I don't know you.

Humans have long marked the location and path of the sun through the sky, laying down its shadow (woodhenge, sundial, stonehenge, and its shadow, the snakes of Chichen Itza), marking the year, the season, the day, demarking time, making time, aiding humans in managing planting and harvest, and migration and praise and expectations. So too the more coyly (not coyly, maybe coolly -- a flash of gold underwater) with the lunar calendar and the phases of the moon, the waxing and waning, the crescent and gibbous. The rainbow, not so much. The rainbow is fleeting, ephemeral.

Will you ever return?

The sun burns a hole in the sky. We see but a specter of it, but we have all this life to show for it. We know it is there. The rainbow shows the way, a phantasamorgification, a trick of the eye, we know it's there, we know it's not



there, that its all wave, a burning ball of hydrogen, not substance, something to behold, not to be held. The moon, it has a face it shows us, but is it really there? Yes, there are the aforementioned ebbs and flows, but have you seen the recordings of how those long ago mythical astronauts bounced upon it, how they sank into its dust and floated partway into space before returning to the lunar surface? When we look away, at anything else, is the moon still there? If all of us conscious humans simultaneously averted our gaze, or if we closed our eyes in unison, would the moon persist as a solid dusty object orbiting us in phase? Or would it decohere, get fuzzy, hazy, foggy around the edges, [illegible] their possible positions [illegible] a smear in the sky -- could [illegible] in such a critical state, could [illegible] face, with my gaze averted, with my eyes closed? And if I never opened them again? I never want to open them again. Please don't ever make me open my eyes again. I have that perhaps each particle of the moon can observe every other particle and that is why, if it does, the moon persists and decoheres into solidity and follows its path orbit cycle without me, without us, with my eyes closed, and that therefore I am unnecessary to the moon's existence and consistence and continuity. I bear no responsibility for it any longer, nor it for me, and for that I am profoundly thankful, for it means the moon is an independent entity, and I need not ever open my eyes again.

February 11, afternoon

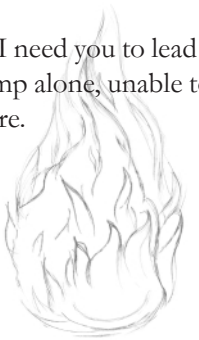
I don't know what to tell you, meaning me. My eyes must have been open to have written that, to have written me here. Maybe I shut them immediately after, as well as in between words, perhaps in between letters, in between pen strokes. They must be open now; I cannot write with my eyes closed, not in any way you -- I -- she -- could understand, but yes perhaps they are closed in between. I am here, in the words, or else in the in between.

But whatever the resolution of the dilemma of wishing my eyes closed forever, whilst (perhaps against my own volition) persisting here on the page (diary-ing -- a pastime pathetic for pathos), I do not know how to find my way out of here without you.

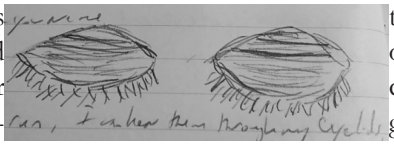
You are the one who goes.

I do not trust Mr. Burneau. And I do not know if I trust you, because you are me.

But I do know that I need you to lead me out of this place where I sit on a stump alone, unable to go, staring into the flames of a dying fire.



February 12

The rhinoceri run. I can hear them through my eyelids. I cannot hear the elephants or blue pigs or persons in cages or the slugs, not from in here with my eyes closed. Yes yes, fuck it, I can write with my eyes closed (*Consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds.* -- R.W. Emerson) -- it's good to learn new skills for self-reliance when you are of a significant age, so your brain doesn't atrophy, so you can busy yourself with hobbies to kill time, so you aren't dependent on others, so I may not be able to get out of here, but I simultaneously do not need to open my eyes to tell myself about it. I won't be trapped, not like that. You will not be able to read about my or your surroundings because I cannot see them -- there, retribution for how you're treating me, who is also you. A slap on the wrist, but it's what I can muster. For all I know (absent visual confirmation), my surroundings do not exist, minus the thundering rhinoceri, but they are always  there, like the wind off the ocean or cosmic background radiation or the voice in my brain that I cannot turn off.

I'm writing a diary -- I cannot deny it with my eyes closed -- a journal, a book about you, and you aren't here. About you, a part of me, apart. I am writing a book about me, and I cannot find me, and I cannot get out of this corner this dead end this purgatory I've written myself into, this betrayal of myself, and not only that -- I do not exist without writing it, and therefore I must keep writing, keep experiencing the burn, the stomach eating itself, the hole inside, or else cease.

You [illegible] there -- I am -- another part of m[illegible]ave left. I am w[illegible]out me and you. U[illegible]ay it should be you and I, but [illegible] I mea[illegible]st words in a book -- it's hardly a book -- [illegible]ook -- not about -- it's field notes -- fo[illegible]ck it, fu[illegible]fuck me with my eyes clos[illegible], I'm right here, write [illegible]on these li[illegible] strokes. I cannot get away.

You have left me and with my eyes closed all I can write about it is what is in my mind.

There are voices in my mind.

Bathochordaeus stygius, Sherlock, R.E., Walz, K.R. and Robison, B.H., CC BY-SA 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons.

I am a larvacean.

Too on the nose.

I don't believe in noses.

I recently read Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si'* from 2015. I am not catholic and do not believe in a pope or God, not like that, or the Bible except as story, and I like to tell myself, as I do so now, that I do not believe in story. But one does not need to believe in such things to take words to heart, including Francis's words about previous versions of himself:

> *Saint John Paul II became increasingly concerned about this issue. In his first Encyclical he warned that human beings frequently seem "to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption". … Authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us and "take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system".*

If we approach nature and the environment without this openness to awe and wonder, if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs. By contrast, if we feel intimately united with all that exists, then sobriety and care will well up spontaneously. The poverty and austerity of Saint Francis were no mere veneer of asceticism, but something much more radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled.

Such a conviction cannot be written off as naive romanticism, for it affects the choices which determine our behaviour.

At the same time, (Ecumenical Patriarch) Bartholomew has drawn attention to the ethical and spiritual roots of environmental problems, which require that we look for solutions not only in technology but in a change of humanity; otherwise we would be dealing merely with symptoms. He asks us to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, an asceticism which "entails learning to give, and not simply to give up. It is a way of loving, of moving gradually away from what I want to what God's world needs. It is liberation from fear, greed and compulsion".

With paternal concern, Benedict (XVI) urged us to realize that creation is harmed "where we ourselves have the final word, where everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone. The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves".

Just as happens when we fall in love with someone, whenever he (Saint Francis of Assisi) would gaze at the sun, the moon or the smallest of animals, he burst into song, drawing all other creatures into his praise. He communed with all creation, even preaching to the flowers, inviting them "to praise the Lord, just as if they were endowed with reason". His response to the world around him was so much more than intellectual appreciation or economic calculus, for to him each and every creature was a sister united to him by bonds of affection. That is why he felt called to care for all that exists. His disciple Saint Bonaventure tells us that, "from a reflection on the primary source of all things, filled with even more abundant piety, he would call creatures, no matter how small, by the name of 'brother' or 'sister'".

Where is your want to ride a rainbow, your longing to embrace the moon, your ache to walk into the sun, in the encyclical? Where are you? [redacted]?

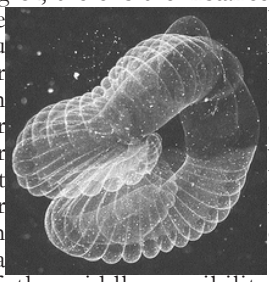
February 14

It is the day of St. Valentines, that old sconce. His flower-crowned skull lives on, [redacted]

I distract myself. I try. I fail. The roil in my stomach remains, the storm, the churn of the sea. I close my eyes, which were already closed, and turn my attention.

How do I fare under the scrutiny of patronizing admonitions, encircled by cyclical condemnations, reflected by paternal calls to action? Not well, I admit. considering how I've squirreled, cloistered, monked myself into this journal to the detriment of the rest of my life, which seems to have evaporated or melted or otherwise dispersed -- where are my responsibilities?, they must be carrying on without me, maybe I taught them so well they can now take care of themselves (a pretty dream) -- such that I do not know if I exist anywhere but here.

Here, where I am simultaneously lost and trapped, alone, with and without myself, unable to get out to search for you, unable to stop producing words and thereby cease. For whole days at a time I do, I do cease, but I always come back up gasping, dribbling. And then, speaking of, there is the instance of me that is you, out there bouncing on Mr. Burneau in some tent or teepee or hut, grinding for days on end, whichever end, fiddling with a fiddler who might be real or might be my fabrication or might be a pseudonym of a lascivious cipher circa 1934, or all three, and if the middle possibility holds water, credence, an aspect of truth, then you are also sexxing yourself, meaning I am sexxing myself, and I can only imagine the Pope, all the Popes, holy cow there have been a lot of Popes, have a thing or two to say about



And then there is what became of me the last few days, today and yesterday to be precise. I will note it here, for me, for her in the future, yet a saint, the cheese wheel, the pedestal on which we place our future selves, she still holds water, but not, I think, today. His story is for tomorrow.

Where are you? How can I not be present, if the words yet dribble out?

My head throbs, billows, pulses in depths darker than night, attempting to filter out material thought action to sustain, trying to suss a way forward.

ON

February 14, late in the afternoon

Especially considering how I spend my evenings. How do I spend my evenings? I don't know. I always forget. Or else the evening is always in the future and I am inside an interminable afternoon -- you are outside this afternoon but the afternoon is inside you -- I wish I could forget but it is still St. Valentine's Day, but it happened, is happening, will have been happening, does that tense presuppose a termination. I don't mean to dwell, there must be a forward, a right way, put everything in the balance, the yays and nays and plusses and minuses and ins and outs.

Here is where I dwell.

She would know what I do in the evenings, she that impossible saint of the future, that unrealistic or unrealized I.

Always with the fucking I's. I. Aye. I is eye. Where is the sense the raisin the porpoise in the nonsense?

It's right fucking here. Open your eyes.

No, I won't. I can't. I cannot open my eyes, it might kill me. I might die, and then where would you be?

February 15, 2023

FIENDISH DEEDS OF A TRAMP

Mr. Burneau (the song hunter) collected this song by Wilson "Slavin' Chain" Jones (guitar) and Charles Gobert (fiddle) and Octave Amos (banjo) in Lafayette Parish in 1934. Batson the man was subject to the events in the song several decades previous, circa 1902, as well as on February 13th and 14th, 2023, when Mr. Burneau related it to you..

Don't worry, my eyes are closed, so I cannot die.

GUILTY? SIDE LIGHTS ON THE BATSON CASE, A RECRUDESCENCE OF THE MURDER OF THE EARL FAMILY IN LOUISIANA 1903

Batson had been working for Mr. Earle for six long years, never with pay, when he asked Mr. Earle if he could take a walk. To which Mr. Earle replied, "You can go and come right back." And so Batson hitched Mr. Earle's two bay horses to his wagon, took the wagon to pick up a load of feed, and returned to complete his afternoon duties before commencing his walk. He walked uptown. He was admiring showcases in the storefronts, engaging in window shopping (for what I don't know -- he had no money -- it is hard to shake a mindset of lack when one has nothing, arguably even oneself -- perhaps he was acquiring wants) when Mr. Sheriff (Mr. Henry Reese) and his

You could hear poor Batson crying, "You're trying me for murder, and I know I never harmed no one."

Oh Mama, I never harm no one.

He took a pencil in his hand

He noted everyday he laid

February 16

Batson's little girl begin to cry,

"Daddy, what they going to do with you?"

deputy come walking down the street and put two 45's in his face. Batson put his hands up, but the deputy slapped him and said, "You're under arrest, Batson." "What are you arresting me for?" "You know all about it yourself, Batson." They threw him in the parish jail, and he cried and he cried.

The jurymen found him guilty,

And the judge passed the sentence,

Batson was to be hung.

He left a final note:

"They call me a tramp, a murderer of Mr. Earle, a fiend, guilty. But I've lived my life to the best I am able to not hurt a soul. You convict me, you hang me, so you take care of my two little girls. A.E. Batson, Friend to All. Ha, ha, bye-bye, I'm gone."

Baston's sister asked him,

"When you coming back again?"

He cried to all the people gathered from miles and miles to take care of his two little girls, because he wasn't ever coming home no more.

They put a black bonnet over his head

They put a rope right 'round his neck

They put handcuffs on his hands

They put balls and chains on his feet

The clear blood run out of his eyes

Nobody could see his face

Had a tongue stuck out of his mouth

Six inches long

Caffery, Joshua Clegg. *Traditional Music in Coastal Louisiana: The 1934 [John and Alan] Lomax Recordings*, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 2013. [ed. 12-12-24]

That was the end of Batson, and of the song hunter's work. He is gone, and I will never open my eyes again, and she will cry and cry and cry. Thus transpired the events of February 13th and 14th 2023, and June 1934, and 1902-1903.

I'M THE MAN IN THE BOX

Layne Staley, Jerry Cantrell, Alice in Chains, 1990.

March 27, 2024

You'd think I was the one pushing daisies, what with all this mordant talk. I'm not, not yet. I might be in the time when you read this. In which case you would not be me, except in a different sense -- perhaps the sense of being him. Or the sense of being part past me. You could be her, or you could not. But I'm not pushing daisies now, as I note. Not yet.

February 17

You are walking. You will always be there, here, in the pages, in the past, in the paper tent. But you have left you. What you did, what you are doing, what you will be doing there isn't the point. I don't know what the point is, how to figure it. My eyes are closed. He is dead again and again and again. Everyday, left. But you are walking, and I am by necessity with you. You are my eyes.

You are making choices through the unknowable, determining the undetermined, living through the choke point or the apex or the neck of multiple simultaneous possible realities resolving into one. You are a thunderbird, a totem pole. You are a thunderbird sitting atop your totem pole. You prepare to soar.

No, no -- calm down. You are walking. The squelch of your footsteps is like the leach of leeches.

I am floundering, gasping at straws, throwing shit against the wall to see what sticks. The shit is supposed to be spaghetti. I am desperate, clearly, as evidenced by my appropriation of others' songs.

Please, take over. I cannot go on without you. (I said I am with you: you are my eyes where you go, and at the same time you are here in these words, but at the same time, you are not here -- I cannot hear you.) I am asking you to please come home. I cannot live rightly without you.

I need you. I am trapped here while you are out there. The door that is simultaneously open and closed cannot be exited or entered. I cannot journey in a journal.

Please, tell me you walk.

Thank you

YOU

February 17

You walk. You are filthy with want of bathing. Good, good. The mud squelches around your bare feet. The leeches latch onto your ankles, your calves, and though the experts' medical advice is to leave them until they have their fill and release you willingly, so as not to disgorge their contents or leave mouth parts in you, you pick pull pry them off and toss them, leaving lesions. You are doing well, better than I. I don't know what better means.

You walk alone through a burial ground. On one side of the path is the pauper's field: bodies heaped under ground you cannot see through, in pits without boxes or in cheap pine that has long since rotted away, flesh gone back to soil, bodies laid horizontal close by one another, unmarked, the field chock full of bones, nothing but bones and worms. First mention of worms -- untrue -- underground -- accumulated lives once attached to bones -- gone -- Gone to what? -- To where? -- from one generation to the next, to the next, to the next -- is that sustainable? (how much is lost of any one person's experience in the process, in the end, not the end, in an end) far enough into the future not even the bones are left, only the faint feeling (could there be even the faintest impression left by any one existence on the greater conglomeration, hundreds -- thousands of years later) ~~the mist hanging over the field,~~ the fog hangs over the ground, what remains of the bones under, within, the dirt, ~~bones such as teeth,~~ teeth suspended in the earth, and above the teeth -- in the fog -- hangs a sign, a wooden sign, words carved into the wood by hand with a gouge, words that must be incessantly regouged for the sign to not be effaced by wind and rain and rats and rainbows and target practice and spray-paint and elephants using it as a backscratcher, lit by the light of the sun reflected off the face moon

walk

Here Lie the Paupers

And so this knowledge will be unfolded only through long successive ages. There will come a time when our descendants will be amazed that we did not know things that are so plain to them… Let us be satisfied with what we have found out, and let our descendants also contribute something to the truth… Many discoveries are reserved for ages still to come, when memory of us will have been effaced.

Seneca the Younger, *Naturales Quaestiones*, 65 CE.
(Ord, Toby, *The Precipice: Existential Risk and the Future of Humanity*, 2021.)

February 18

THE PRIESTESS

On the other side of the path, the burial ground is inhabited by headstones, statues, mausoleums, earthen mounds, sculptures, obelisks, monuments, pyramids, temples. There is not a gravesite that has not been pillaged. Bones of bodies once interned in the vertical position lay scattered across the grounds. The valuables have been confiscated. Jewelry, gems, shells, weapons, metals, tools, stone carvings, dyed robes, intact pottery are absent, reclaimed, repurposed. Headstones are by and large toppled alongside the holes they marked and their concomitant piles of dirt. Statues are headless or limbless or violated by obelisks. Skulls have been placed atop statues and obelisks and pyramids. A low wall of skulls demarks the cemetery from the living world. A skull made of skulls adorns one wall of a temple. The temple, the mausoleum, the pyramids are in ruins, collapsed, stones hauled away to build other buildings elsewhere, finery smashed, the surplus wealth, the ingenuity, the forced or coerced or finessed or manipulated systemic labor energy (the people power) applied to erect on a monumental scale has dispersed (not disappeared -- energy is con-

served, flowing into others' subsistence, survival, even recreation, mutual care, reciprocity). The pillars have been torn down. Stolen or repurposed is a matter of point of view, you say, *Property is a convention*, you see. The sarcophagi are gone, the brains dumped from their pots, the embalming fluids leached into the aquifer. The marble is a sort of desecration, the use of it ostentatious in light of today's deprivation -- shards litter the ground -- the destruction of it a waste, or else a performative comment, a taking of power where it can be had, a shattering. You put a sliver of marble in your pocket for safekeeping, for an unknown application, for remembrance, for the future. On the back of a headstone face down in the rubble has been sloppily inscribed, chiseled, graffiti'd in the selfsame moonlight, very late in the afternoon:

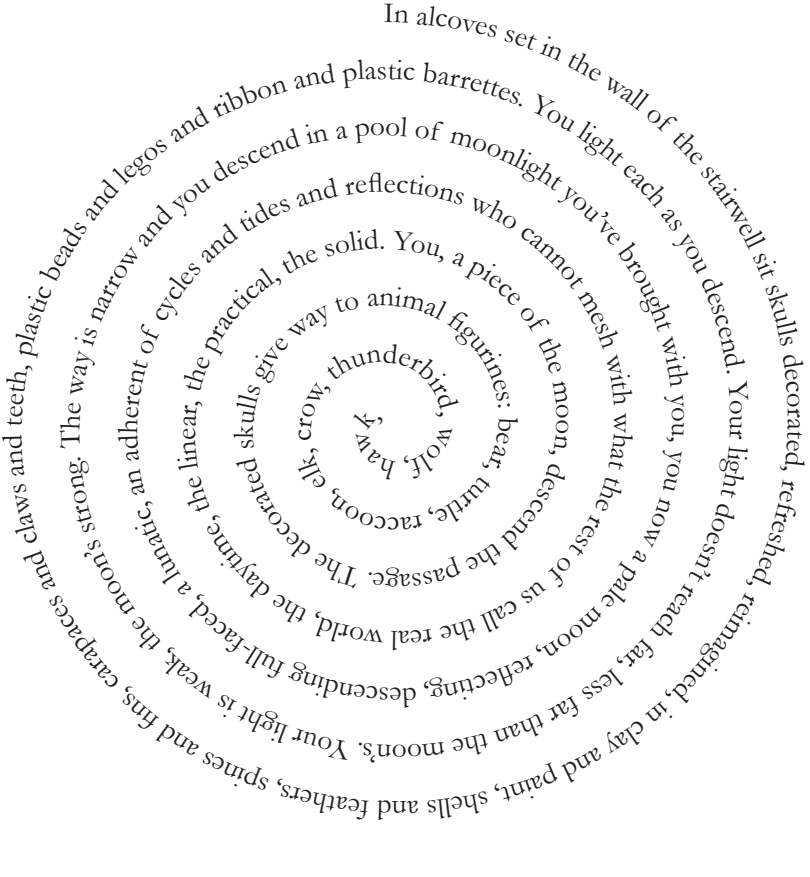
> *A person who could afford to spend and consume more but regularly uses less heating and wears warmer clothes, shows the kind of conviction and attitudes which allay the catastrophes we precipitate and deny contributing to, because distractions dull our consciousness.*
>
> -- The Pope

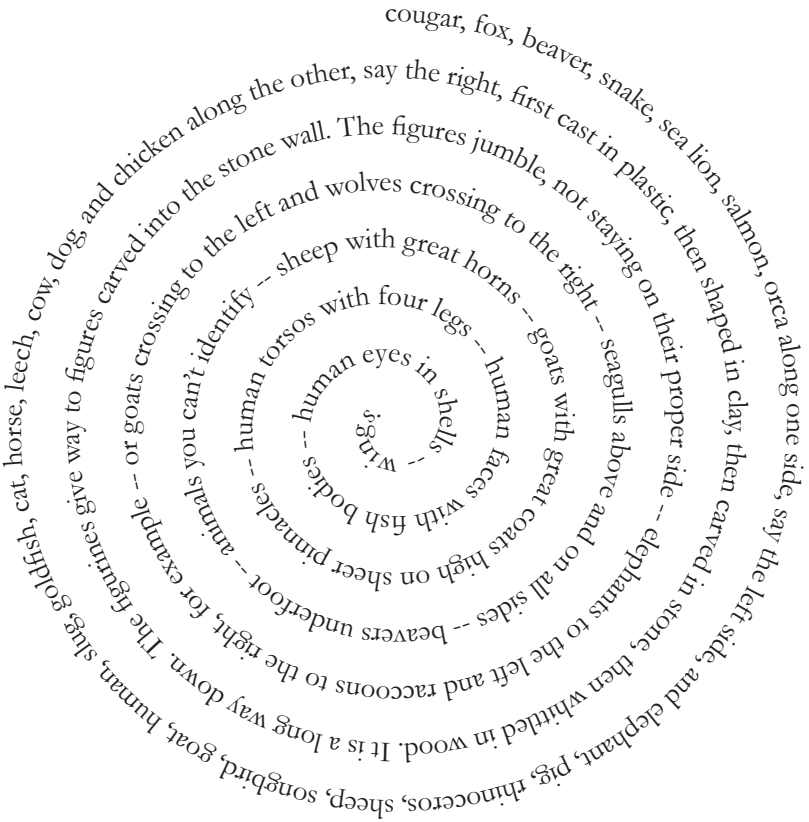
February 19

You pick your way through this vacant quarter. There appears to be nothing left to glean, nothing of value, nothing of use. No rodents scurry, no worms wriggle, no birds sing. There is not a raven to caw. And yet there is a sort of footpath winding its way through the debris. Footpath is too strong, contiguous depressions in the ground, bare

patches a stride's length apart worn by the tread of numerous feet over ages ~~-- numerous in relation to you, who are singular, if not to all who have preceded you in death~~. You follow the tread to the absence of a temple or sanctuary or shrine or mausoleum, the walls rubble around a hole in the ground. Steep stairs descend. You descend. The moonlight does not penetrate far into the hole,* but you do not hesitate, being who you are -- a person who goes -- on the cusp of discovering some aspect of purpose or minutiae of meaning. You remove a flashlight or a torch from the bag he packed for you ~~(you've eaten or shared the sandwiches and granola bars he sent with you, as well as the apples she gleaned, an instance of a she in the past despite my definition of she being the product of you and I in the future)~~ and turn it on or light it. You descend.

*~~(I apologize for the wordchoice but there is no better verb for what you see the moonlight doing or not doing to the hole, what I see through your eyes, what you experience)~~


In alcoves set in the wall of the stairwell sit skulls decorated, refreshed, remagined, in clay and paint, shells and feathers, spines and fins, carapaces and claws and teeth, plastic beads and legos and ribbon and plastic barrettes. You light each as you descend. Your light doesn't reach far, less far than the moon's. Your light is weak, the moon's strong. The way is narrow and you descend in a pool of moonlight you've brought with you, you now a pale moon, reflecting, descending full-faced, a lunatic, an adherent of cycles and tides and reflections who cannot mesh with what the rest of us call the real world, the daytime, the linear, the practical, the solid. You, a piece of the moon, descend the passage. The decorated skulls give way to animal figurines: bear, turtle, raccoon, elk, crow, thunderbird, wolf, hare, ?


cougar, fox, beaver, snake, sea lion, salmon, orca along one side, say the left side, and elephant, pig, rhinoceros, sheep, songbird, goat, human, slug, goldfish, cat, horse, leech, cow, dog, and chicken along the other, say the right, first cast in plastic, then shaped in clay, then carved in stone, then whittled in wood. It is a long way down. The figurines give way to figures carved into the stone wall. The figures jumble, not staying on their proper side -- elephants to the left and wolves crossing to the right -- seagulls above and on all sides -- beavers underfoot -- animals you can't identify -- sheep with great horns -- goats with great coats high on sheer pinnacles -- human torsos with four legs -- human faces with fish bodies -- human eyes in shells -- wings

As the passage gives way to a cave the figures in relief give way to figures painted in crimson and ochre and charcoal black: troubadours singing -- animals apportioning apples around a fire -- seagulls ~~gamboling~~ gambling clams clamoring around a circle in the sand -- a heron fishing -- a raccoon in a labyrinth on a vision quest -- red, black, orange, yellow, raspberry. (Why no blue? ~~Or the variations, green, purple, aquamarine. Were there no blues then? Is that a stupid or romantic or naive or adolescent question, for whenever then this is?~~) Some of the figures are ~~representational~~ realistic -- a snake eating its tail; some are fantastic -- a spider with a human head; some you can only imagine -- burning lattices of light beings constituted of the fusion of hydrogen.

On the far wall entering your pool of light as you proceed is a painting of you, many times larger than life. The painting is of you standing with your arms upraised nearly embracing an enormous yellow moon, of you dancing wildly beneath it, whirling naked in the moonlight, of you on your knees, prostrate in the position of prayer to the moon.

February 20

Within the immense cavern are mud and timber structures stacked like building blocks, sometimes ten deep, so that the dwellings on the bottom are crushed, becoming foundations for the more recent homes. They have tiny holes for windows; the doors are on the roofs, accessible by ancient decrepit ladders; your light casts their shadows. Perhaps these were seasonal dwellings used in summer when the temperatures were scorching outside but cool in the cave and the spring floods had receded and flood retreat farming could be practiced for several months in the rich alluvial plain, soil shifting annually, land distributed by size of family. Or perhaps the produce was common and the land worked together, and perhaps the inhabitants moved on in winter to other hunting and foraging lands. Or perhaps they moved here to wait out the long cold winters in the temperate shelter of the cavern and conduct the rituals that established and developed their sense of who they were, their sense of self, their relationship to each other and the surrounding world, enacting the imagery that developed their concept of mind, of who they were as a people and what they owed one another and those of the past and future. Perhaps it was a place of refuge in times of hardship and persecution, a place to care for each other. You do not know.

A giant red thunderbird swoops on the ceiling circling you; a black orca breaches as if to devour the golden moon or perhaps the three you's enacting its adoration. You are alone and alive and you dive into a tunnel opening beneath you praying.

This new or continued passage is no wider or taller than you. You light little. Damp stone squeezes your shoulders. Dark-ness. You feel you have

Trapped, confined, squeezed, unable to breathe, desperate to move, aching, burning, unable to move.

been here before, many times before. Does it always come down to this? How forward? You

turn sideways, take a breath, take a step forward, sideways, and the tunnel constricts like a stone snake. Passages open on either side at irregular intervals. No current of air or bit of light or variation in stone or azimuth or inclination to indicate what path you should take as you inch forward. Breath is shallow, chest can barely rise, abdomen cannot. And then somehow, having written it, the stone wall swells into your stomach as you scooch. You burn for breath. You

turn into a side passage. Perhaps it will admit you. Perhaps not, but no, it is the same, closing. You breath -- constriction and the constraint is so great your light goes out --

turn again same closing and you

turn again and inch and it is the same closing and you

turn again and inch and it is the same always closing and you

darker than moonless night

darker than you imagine

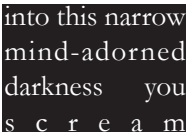
darker than eyes closed

created by your brain

stimulation in your eyes

created by the absence of

a darkness pinpricked by points of light



You scream, and your scream returns
to you. You return to you from before
and behind. You cannot move. You
breathe quickly, shal- lowly, barely. An afib
breath, an intake of nothing. You echo
and cry without s o u n d .

You see the voice.

You thought your eyes were closed; it is so dark. Do they tear open or do you see through the lids. You see the voice.

Shhhhh.

Quiet.

Breathe.

As it recedes, you panic. Returned to darkness, it was always darkness, but returned to seeing nothing, where did it go. But you quiet yourself and focus on your breathing, a rhythm of in out, shallow but for space, but under con-

you can. The voice disappears around a corner, but when you reach the corner it is waiting for you at an indeterminate distance and you press on. As you press the stone loosens, imperceptibly at first, until you perceive it, a release of grip -- you can breathe, turning and turning, guided by the voice, passage after passage. You face forward, no longer scuttling, and stride after the voice in the darkness, a voice in the stone. You follow it into a room, not a large room, but a stone-walled room largely occupied by a central large stone scripted in runes lit by a shaft of afternoon sun piercing through a skylight.

You see the voice in the stone say,

Detranscendentalize your perspective.

And then, by way of apology or explanation or progress or persistence,

My once honeyed mouth has now become froth
My power to please hearts is turned to dust
I am the first I
Enheduanna

February 21

After some difficulty, you manage to make your mouth work, your tongue your lips your teeth.

-- The first what?

-- The first voice to be seen, to be attributed, to be identified.

-- Excuse me?

-- I am the first author.

-- You sound blue.

-- I am hungry. I am the high priestess of the moon god in Ur.

-- It does appear to be late afternoon outside. I live close to the bone.

The General forced his way in as if he were an equal
He dared approach me in his lust
He made me walk a land of thorns
He took away the noble diadem of my holy office
He gave me a dagger: "This is just right for you," he said.

-- And yet you are here.

-- A voice in stone. The Exaltation of Edhuanna has been taught to generation after generation in this school. Rubble, now. Remains of stone disks and scrawls on clay tablets I am to you in whatever this is, a vision, an archeology, a history, a herstory, notes on an exploration. I survived by writing my voice, by making it solid, by making it visible and persistent. I survived by my rhetoric.

My moonlight has no care for me

becomes

This fills me, this overflows from me, Exalted Lady, as I give birth for you
What I confided to you in the dark of night
A singer shall perform for you in the bright of day

In between is the journey I made visible.

-- Why was I brought here?

-- You weren't brought here. You came here. You drew yourself. You are a lunatic.

-- But the labyrinth, the trials, the animals, the city in the cavern in the stones.

-- Physical places, entities, actions in your mind. You make of them what you will. Detrascendentalize from the concept in your mind of what I and you and they are, to what we owe others past, present, and future.

-- You're telling me I'm a lunatic.

-- Detrascendentalize from stone to stone, voice to voice, vision to action.

February 22

-- It's hard to swallow.

-- I am not something you swallow. I am not someone you swallow. I am not an idea you swallow. I am not a swallow.

-- Ok, then tell me about the commonists. Teach me about May Day and the Maypole and the Haymarket Riots and mayday and the Sun Dance. Inform me of how violent inequality issues from the fiction of legal equality. Imbue me with knowledge on the balance in a human heart and a civilization's mind, of asylum refuge hospitality shelter civility care versus math and violence, so I might know how to live.

-- You know how to live.

-- That is absurd. I am bookended by stone, nowhere to go.

-- Then push.

-- Your voice does not appear appreciably different from that of the Salt Whore, the Water Bearer, the Apple Gleaner.

-- That is a failure of your imagination, not mine. It may as well be the same as his, and Burneau's, and Baston's, and your own.

-- What am I to push? You, a stone, a boulder that rolled off some long eroded mountain into this field that they built a temple around, a city become a graveyard, an accretion of life evolved into a vacant quarter?

-- Somewhere along the way we became uncomfortable with being unhappy and obsessed with having fun. We exchanged the uncertainties of gleaning and foraging and scrabbling and living close to the bone for creature comforts and the (un)certainties of wages -- Stop. -- We traded -- Shut up with your words in my mouth and walk.

-- Walk where? Your voice is stone, everywhere.

-- My voice has been seen. Your eyes are closed. My voice has exalted and exposed and exhumed. This is not my voice.

-- Your voice …

-- *The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophe.*----------That is not my voice. It is his.

-- But what it's saying is --

-- I am not saying it is right or wrong. I am saying it is not my voice. It is his, conveyed, transmuted, transubstantiated, from him through you into me. He replaced my gods with his god, so what. ~~He omitted the Oxford comma, like a papal stooge who doesn't care about how punctuation establishes meaning. So what?~~ My gods were cruel, his gods have been cruel. Putting entities in positions of such power breeds cruelty. Spread authorship out even. We believe and do not believe in transubstantiation.

-- What if I didn't replace refresh change these clothes I wear until they wore away, would I cease to exist, until they rotted away, would the I of I be gone, until --

I excise the remainder of that question from your narrative, from your notes on this encounter, as I've edited other stupid things you've said, while leaving other stupid things evident for the record, indicative of you, and the words you've put in my mouth. I can do this because I'm the first. I'm the priestess who worded the moonlight, who made her voice visible and impregnated it in stone. Thereby she became I, and therefore I can reach into you, the you who refers to

theirself as I, and re-write you. I'm the one you want. They all want the ur-author. He took me, but he couldn't take me, couldn't have me, look at me, and where is that motherfucker, not even a bag of bones long digested by mice gone to worms. You are re-membered based on how you treat people and what you do for humanity, and how much of an asshole you are. I have been defaced, rewritten, even erased, by him, by you. But I am still right here. Now push, m o t h e r f u c k e r .

-- But --

PUSH.

-- I I I can't --

-- *If you can't fly, then run. If you can't run, then walk. If you can't walk, then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving. MLK*

-- The stone --

You dare
to put words in my
voice, to manipulate my
tongue to your end. I am Ur. I
made my voice seen. Put your tongue
to my end and do what I tell you. Un-
furl your leech larvacean billowing head
cheese to catch the current the hot air the
long arc of history the moral rainbow the
arrow of time the
breath of voice the
solar wind out the
skylight. Push
out of me.

Lasers shed light on the inner workings of the giant Larvacean. Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute Press Release: 5-03-2017. https://www.mbari.org/news/lasers-shed-light-on-the-inner-workings-of-the-giant-larvacean/

February 23

You stand in the afternoon sunlight.

A late February snow dusts the ground. The temperature is below freezing, where you are. Still the sparrows and the dark-eyed juncos flit.

A pair of northern flickers peck ants among the stones and laugh.

A clump of dog hair rocks in the forced air current on the floor, where I am.

A man of power, in control of his people's information and violence, manipulating a certain perplexing masochistic masculine charisma, blows smoke up people's collective ass and in so doing decimates a physical country and mutilates human beings in an attempt to possess an idea, or if not, to destroy an idea, an identity, a country in the mind.

These are merely field notes where I note observations and try to determine how to live.

A train derailment and subsequent toxic spill in Ohio. Students are shot by the government at Kent State. Rogue nationalists or antinationalists plot to kidnap the governor of Michigan. A boy is shot and killed by the police in Cleveland, in Florida; a man is beaten to death by the law in Memphis; a man is suffocated to death in Minneapolis, in New York, in Tacoma by the authorities. A polar ice sheet collapses.

> *Human salvation lies in the hands of the creatively maladjusted.*

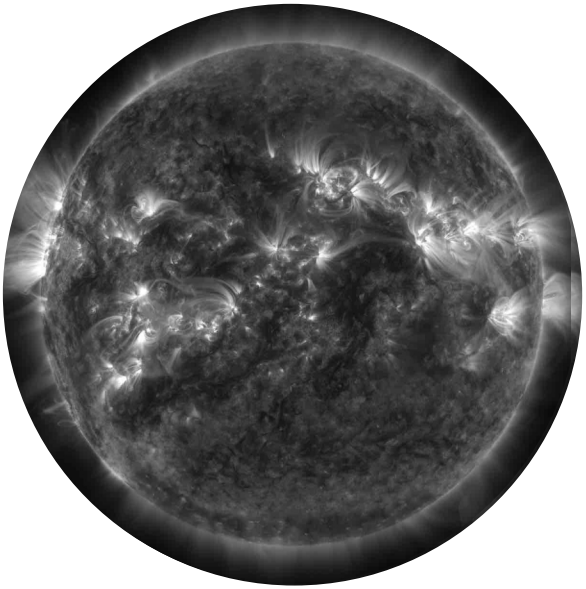
(Self-serving tripe poached from the most obvious source, MLK Jr.)

> *Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.*

(And yet there he is, dead, silenced -- he'd be dead anyhow by now, he was a man not a god -- conveniently when he became subversive to the economic system.)

I guess the question I'm asking is am I wasting my one opportunity to live? What would I be willing to die for?

~~Yesterday afternoon I arrived home after taking care of my responsibilities despite being unable to exit or enter the door that is simultaneously open and closed, despite being unable to exit or exist outside these passages, despite navigating the rhinoceri on the road with my eyes closed on naught but an electric moped with a twenty mile per hour south wind in my face, despite my eyes being on you trapped in a stone resin perhaps of your own design. Despite being tired I walked a responsibility, I walked a responsibility, I walked a responsibility. I walked a responsibility. I walked a responsibility.



As sung by Vanity Fair, 1969, December 29, 2024

In the sun, there's so much yellow
Something in the early morning meadow
Tells me that today you're on your way

"Early in the Morning"

I would die for you. But I don't know how. And you are not here.

I am hungry.

February 23, later

Precious few of these notes, these entries, have been written, entered, in the afternoon, my afternoon, the afternoon of the day on which I noted them. Does that make me a bad person, that I lie to you, fictionalize, run away with myself, do I do you wrong. Precious few, precious few precious moments, they're what you, I, one lives for, the precious moments, kill me now, by blunt object, that would be a precious moment, but I don't want to infect you, pleading for you to do me wrong, you're not here, let alone her, my future precious moment of me, I don't know how she would reach in here and finish me and relieve me of thinking about thinking about precious moments come and gone.

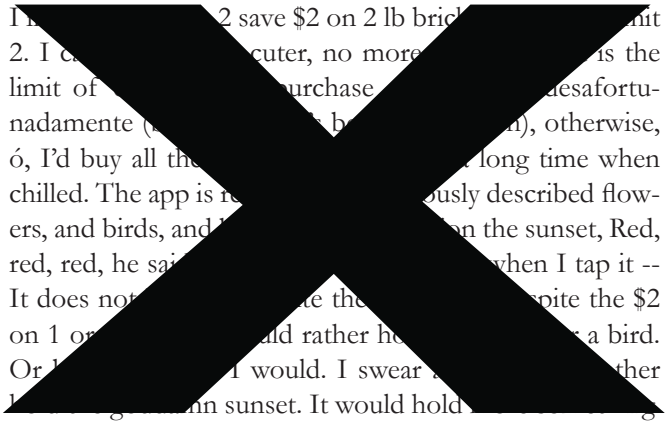
This note was entered in the late afternoon -- I affirm, I attest, I swear -- the late late afternoon.

February 24

I am still hungry. Where are you? Standing in the sun in the snow. Not here. For how many times I ask the question, does the answer remain the same? Does the question.

Two thousand years ago, four thousand, ten thousand, more, has the slope of our moral arc, the derivative, increased or decreased or flattened? Has it gone negative like the right side of a rainbow and come back to earth? What of the shaded area under the curve, the integral?

Is killing oneself by blunt over-self-questioning like, similar to, a metaphor for a metasimile a metaphysic of self-inflicted death by a million papercuts?



Standing in the snow. How many times must I say it to be true. Standing in the sun. I do hope that for you. I can share that part of me. The sun is a big place, with plenty of fusion for all and an abundance of heat.

It is exceedingly cold today, for late February in the [redacted], a time and place where spring tends to spring.

Where and when crocuses rise. The days get longer. The treasure is just over the horizon. (Seriously, what if I never bought anything again for the rest of my life? Except food. I am hungry. What if I consumed nothing but food and water, for as long as I might exist. Would that act be beneficial to humanity, useful for the universe, good for existence?)

Except food.
That is the weakest of exceptions. Consume nothing. 12-30-24

Last night the temperature (a measure of heat) dropped to 22° F. On 4-22-22, he wrote a letter to Timothee Chalamet.

Crocus Vernus, Redouté, Pierre Joseph, 1805-1815, Paris, New York Public Library.

4-22-22

Timothée Chalamet -

Were you reading "Malone Dies" in the original French on a flight from Seattle to Chicago on December 27th (or was it the 28th) 2021 while sitting in a window seat & sharing the row with a [redacted] in the aisle seat, the middle seat fantastically open, whose drawing you complimented and to whom you suggested art schools? If so, the [redacted] regardless of if this sleepy young man was you) and I was sitting across the aisle from her, and you, if it was you. Beckett is one of my favorite authors; I've read all his works, theatrical & prose, excepting perhaps his first novel, though I've not read any of the three novels in the original French, because I don't know French, unlike you & apparently the young man on the plane who may or may not have been you. Though the coincidence of French fluency, appearance, and artistic affect between the two of you strains credulity, if you are two different people, as does the coincidence of you sitting in the same row of a flight from Seattle to Chicago, while you tried to keep your head down, as it were, as me & my [redacted], if you are singular. Credulity is strained, then, no matter the actuality, & so I ask, are there two (or more) of you? If the answer is yes, it would explain some things, such as how you managed to perform in three excellent movies released in less than a year?

→

Busyness conquers loneliness, or something, they say, who knows who. Not Beckett, who has been profoundly influential to (in?on?) my writing as a fiction(ish) & theatre writer. To that end, since perhaps you have an affinity for the works of Samuel Beckett, as I do, if you are you or one of you, I am sending you my most recent book "The End." Perhaps it will reach you, perhaps it will disappear into the vortex of wherever fan mail goes. But I promise you no one you know has read it, and that it will be a different kind of read, and that a convicted murderer in a prison in Georgia has read it cover-to-cover three times, back-to-back-to-back. No matter if this is you, I enjoyed Dune (the books hold a special place in my heart & I live in [redacted], where Frank Herbert was from) & The French Dispatch (my special lady friend & I hypothesize that it's the most Wes Anderson-y of Wes Anderson movies) & Don't Look Up (which I thought was perhaps the best movie of the year). Good work, and well-chosen work, whether or not this is you, or that was you, or all the you's are you. It was a unique experience to perhaps share a flight with you.

Yours,
Nick Stokes

[redacted]

February 25

He wrote a letter. He mailed it. Nothing much changed.

You're staring at the sun
Standing in the sea
Your mouth is open wide
You're trying hard to breathe
The water's at your neck
There's lightning in your teeth
Your body's over me

TV on the Radio, 2003

You stick your thought into me. You disrobe me and paint me in ochre and adorn me with beads. You gussy me up in women's clothes and mess around with gender roles -- no -- you dress me in the simple, the primitive, the natural, the pastoral, the forager the hunter the egalitarian, the free spirit savage, the mythic. Because that is what you desire. But I am the voice made visible. Nothing more. Look at me. I have been liberated from body. I am dead and gone and long since rotted away, returned to worm and soil and stars. I am here. I am a fucking goddess, and goddesses are unseen.

They want perfect bodies; *I want a perfect soul.* I cannot abide the thought perception sensation that I'm wasting my time, a day, an afternoon. So you left.

There is a parallelogram of sky, of yellow sunrise in the glass door, in the west-facing glass window door, atop the defoliated shrubbery hedge elderberry and the telephone pole and powerlines and tree branches reaching into the clouds. The golden sun is shining in my face in reflection in the glass and I do not know and cannot apprehend where that piece of sky is. I cannot convey the mislocation (misunderstanding ((sense of lost))).

What is possible?

The sun rises in the west.

It is clearly morning, I divulge. 25° or somesuch on the 25th, who cares, will it be 1° on March 1st? Somewhere. Have I integrity? [redacted] reveal, [redacted] revile, [redacted] relive? Am I ethical. Does my existence matter?

Take my picture
Soon all I will be
Is my disease
TVoTR

Jesus, diary much?, diarrhea of the mouth, of the pen, of the keyboard, if I had a will, no, I have a will, a body to expel, without an excretory system the ink on this skin is all that's left to expel the contaminants, the poison, the unusable (rash inflammation zits hives) the toxic [redacted] oozes seeps wells [redacted] clean myself.

WHAT WOULD HE THINK OF ME?

He wrote that four months ago [2 years ago, as of 2025]. How long have I been unable to excrete, how long leaking?

(On 3-7-22 he wrote, "**Cephalopods**: intelligent, shape changing, morphing, rising out of the sea. Empathy ramp. New dimension of personhood. ((from Jaron Lanier)).)

NOT HE OF FOUR MONTHS AGO, OR A YEAR AGO.

HE OF TWO DECADES AGO, THREE DECADES, FOUR, FIVE, KEEP ADDING DECADES, WHOLE NUMBER INTEGERS PLEASE, HOWEVER FAR YOU WANT TO GO.

-- The Pixies, Black Francis, April 18, 1989

Last night another man at another bar over another drink told me another life story, flipping quarters to make a life choice, best of five, best of five of five, the look in the eyes, does that one count, it hit the floor, disassembling love and relationship and family and whether or not this professional life is an effort to do good in the world or an effort to make money. Should he take the job in Colorado, he just started three companies, he doesn't deal with conflict with women well, he is a person who cares, how do you cope with pain? Everyone has a story; it's a lot to cope with when you exist in a book with your eyes closed.

Vérany, Jean Baptiste, *Mémoire sur deux nouvelles espèces de Céphalopodes trouvées dans l'océan*, via Wikimedia Commons, 1839.

You can cry, you can mope
But can you swing from a good good rope?
I believe, in Mr. Grieves

TV on the Radio
Tunde Adebimpe
July 8, 2003

WHAT WILL SHE THINK OF ME, DOWN THE ROAD?

Afterwards I walked into pickup trucks ~~solipsistically~~ self-centeredly parked blocking the sidewalk. Big deal, big guy.

HE: THE YOUNG MAN I WAS.

SHE: THE POST-MENOPAUSAL WOMAN I WILL BE.

(I'm writing a book about you. I'm writing a book about me. I'm writing a book about me and you. Us. They say it should be you and I, but fuck it. I mean, it's just a book, it's hardly a book, what's a book. Why a book. Give up the pretense of a book. Fuck me, let's roll.)

He wrote that approximately a year ago, in my time, in late winter of 2022.

A real man of action he was (winter, 2025).

WHAT WOULD THEY **T H I N K** ?

I still cannot abide the sense that I am wasting the afternoon I'm not in.

The sun has risen in the west.

It's getting late in the day.

February 26

From very late yesterday afternoon, a note I left for myself:

Idk if many peo-
ple can have known much
more darkness. GD, the quali-
fiers. And those that have would be
dead, wouldn't they? I mean, I'm full. A
scooch more, an iota, and I'll spill all over
the floor, the soil, the pavement. I'm op-
erating under a meniscus, a fingernail, a
total eclipse. Give me too much joy
and … and where I go, you go. To
the abyss and back. Until
there's no and back.

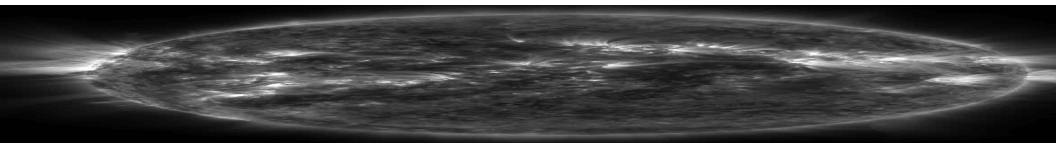
NASA/Nat Gopalswamy,
Aug 21, 2017.

And how am I to take this today? And you? For you, whether I wrote it today or yesterday or tomorrow would, should -- should! -- could hardly make a difference. I try to distance myself from him -- but you, having left, you can close the book. While I have to live with the person who wrote that. I am him. He inhabits me. He didn't want to be alive. I do. Enough -- for now, today is today. You are out there, living.

SWIRLING

men in drag	a sail running up a pole	hula hoops
pumpkin soup	highwire in the rigging	wings
lumber sexual	flying through the air	trapeze
chest hair	balancing on forehead	salmon
voice string	bald heads = boobs	music
trombone	maid soaring through circle	dirty jokes
the french	notes burnt in fake fire	red balloons
burlesque	nod of performer on street	magic

and a conversation with the singer about the shared experience of the absurd nomenclature of partners of lovers of friends, a moment with servers and table bussers and stagehands post show bitching about the rich asshole who wrote on the tablecloth.



It was life incarnate. It was a raisin. He was joyous in the long moment and later he wanted to die. What am I to do with that?

I live precariously in this book if you want to call it that. These notes. Whatever you want. I don't care what you call me, just call me. Surely -- Don't call me Shirley. That's the joke, don't you know. Put a bag over my head. Who would know? My eyes are closed anyway. I'm alone. It's just you and I, and you're gone. He would've killed me if I let him, but I didn't, and she, she would love me, but she has yet to arrive, and I'm beginning to fear, suspect, ac-

knowledge that she is only the me of the future, and the future is never here. They are all out there, and I can share a nod with them, a chat, a moment through the glass, I don't know, a hug, an entanglement across space and time, but afterwards they will always be out there and I will be in here, in the notes, in the after, in the o's, the door simultaneously open and closed, the circles, the hoops, o o in such proximity, the books, always the o o O O O O O O O O O O O the holes stuck between n's in the middle of the after noon.

(Part of it is I want to be them, even though I know part of them probably doesn't want to be them. But also, that's not it at all. I can't explain, I cannibalized all my neuro-chemicals, but that too is too fucking easy.)

February 27

But I'm sorry, I apologize, you're not reading this, if you're reading this, to read about me. Even if you are me, you're reading to read about you, surely, so let's get on with it after all.

Please say with me, Oh the places you'll go.

Your voice is a satellite, where can you be found now, waiting for the signal to sound.

February 28

I do not mean to give the impression that I am predominantly an unhappy person. That would be fiction. I do have moods. I mood. Like the moon. Though I'm not in phase with it; I'm not on that kind of cycle. Still, I do mood. And in a few weeks the days will again be longer than the nights. The peas will be planted. Already, again, the light persists past the afternoon. Things are looking up. (Just as I mood out of sync with the moon, my mood is also not (fully)) contingent on the sun. What of a connection to rainbows? Perhaps a regimented study is in order.) But who would want to read about my happinesses? Probably approximately the same number as want to read about my unhappinesses, namely me in the future (who will she be), which is purely hypothetical and is also approaching the limit of zero, and perhaps the piece of me that left, that is you, if you are curious about what you do, as I am your note taker (secretary?), which is still, when rounded, zero. But no, I don't want to read about me, about any of me, what a smear, so why would any of the rest of me? But then, on another hand, too many hands, field notes, a journal, a god-forbid diary, isn't necessarily about reading.

Which begs the question, Why are you here?

Which begs the question, Why are you not here?

I know, I know, the **sun**, the **moon**, the **rainbows**.

"It's not that you're a bad person," you answer. "It's that you're a larvacean. It's that you're a larvae. It's that you're an open book, in process."

Thank you for your presence in absence.

-- you are standing in the sun in the snow. The s
nelted, and the clouds have rolled in. The mist dr
; the drizzle mists. You are standing in a cloud; you ar
nding in water.

February 28, late in the afternoon

One more black space, darkness, under the belt. One more blank space, vacancy, under the skin. One more discontinuation, void, in the mouth. Who am I and what have I done and what should I do now?

February 28, later in the afternoon

"You stand on Turtle Island," you say to me.

No, no. She says it to you, "You stand on Turtle Island." She, the Salt Whore, the Water Bearer, the Apple Gleaner, the Trash Picker, the Ur-Author.

Maybe you're coming home. Maybe she's sending you to me. Maybe she's singing you home on Turtle Island.

February 28, latest in the afternoon

I cannot shake the feeling that I'm a failure. Not that I'm a failure, but that I have failed, that I fail, that I will have failed.

That, ~~if I were a different person,~~ with ~~a skosh~~ more fortitude, ~~(again with the cochlear scooch) a tad~~ more daring, ~~a touch~~ more willingness to sacrifice ~~my fun and comfort and arousal~~ (would it require more sacrifice of my loves and responsibilities and relationships) and~~/or a hair~~ more skill and ingenuity and effort -~~- three hairs, to name a few (also a hair to hustle)~~ -- I could make **MAGIC**. ~~I could be magic.~~ You could magic with me. ~~And yet here I am, ensconced in a godblessed journal, popping up again and again empty handed when what I want to pop up with is the knowledge of how to live, or you. Again with the sconce. Again with the fail. (Beckett much?)~~ *Yes yes yes* said Molly Bloom, ~~uttering an uncomfortable truth – a popular quote, once upon a time~~.

In the actual afternoon of February 28th

In 1917, the sociologist Max Weber argued that *the fate of our time is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and above all by the disenchantment of the world.*

Quite a statement. I don't know what to do about it. I don't know what to think about it. It is trite, and so long ago, and lengthening. And yet here I am prattling on about

desiring to make magic, unable to quiet. I'm afraid if I quiet, I don't exist.

You stand on Turtle Island with her. The waves lap your ankles. You travel over through on the sea.

> After the afternoon of February 28th
> He could have, I could have, helped develop the vaccine for covid, or contributed to the exploration of Mars, or built bridges or designed helicopters or production lines for better polymers or retrofitted structures to withstand earthquakes or honed the transmission of information via laser or improved the efficiency of toilet paper production, or written songs who climbed poles and flew through the air and engendered gasps and laughter and made magic -- enough magic, made what, life image ritual value, an ethic -- stop -- peace -- be quiet.

March 1

There is a reason I do not write after the afternoon. Why those spaces are left blank, or black if you prefer. In truth (to confess what he has already confessed is an easy act) I but rarely write myself into being in the afternoons, because the afternoons are for doing. Though I am finding doing harder to do when I only exist in a book.

Book has two o's, and remember what fun that can be.

But nevertheless what I will not permit to occur is the deterioration of these notes, the devolution of this journal, the desecration of this book into a woe-is-me diary -- as

if I am the most important being or action in the world -- or the defamation of I with corny typographical hole jokes -- as if o's or holes are funny. I have responsibilities.

MR. GRIEVES

You stand on Turtle Island. It is pulled by orcas. She the many-faced mythic un-saint stands beside you. You share the space atop the shell of the turtle with beaver and weasel and raccoon, with black bear and gray wolf and bobcat, with wapiti and cougar and moose, mule deer and white-tail deer and antelope, mountain goat and bighorn sheep and badger, coyote and fox

and marmot, heron in the tide, thunderbird and red-tailed hawk in the sky, seal and sea lion and salmon in the current, crab and and snake and sea star in between, clam in the sand, sandpiper back and forth. And yes, turtles on the turtle's back. All manner of mice. Alligators, if you get that far south. Pelicans. Cottonmouths, rattlers, javelinas. A sandhill crane. Osprey. Swans. Cormorants. Harlequins and puffins and redheads and mergansers.

It's a veritable Noah's Ark, apparently. Is there the concomitant flood? The cormorant flood? A flood of locusts? A flood of o o o o o o's. Perhaps we made the flood when we melted the polar ice while wearing the skin of porpoises.

Regardless, there is a lot of water and you are traversing it on the back of a turtle inhabited by a bunch of animals.

(A dark-eyed junco just tried to talk to me through the window. I think it was asking about the elephants and pigs and rhinoceri and humans in cages and leeches or slugs, and now, porpoises.)

March 2

"You stand on Turtle Island," she says.

-- Are we getting away?, you ask.

That's why they call it the blues, I answer.

-- Yes and no. The trouble is, our island is rooted to the Earth.

-- It's no trouble.

-- There's just no getting away.

-- The moon is to the ... rough its gravitati... fiel... the Earth is to ... un... well of compr... spac... as the sun ... the bl... le at the ce... of the Mi... ay by ...

-- By the ... your conjured c... oughts. Sure. But ou... r submersive is sub...

-- ... can ... t.

-- I ... don't ... like that ... I did.

-- T... a s...

... defin...

-- Will we ... underwater?

-- Stop ... ng me ... cheese.

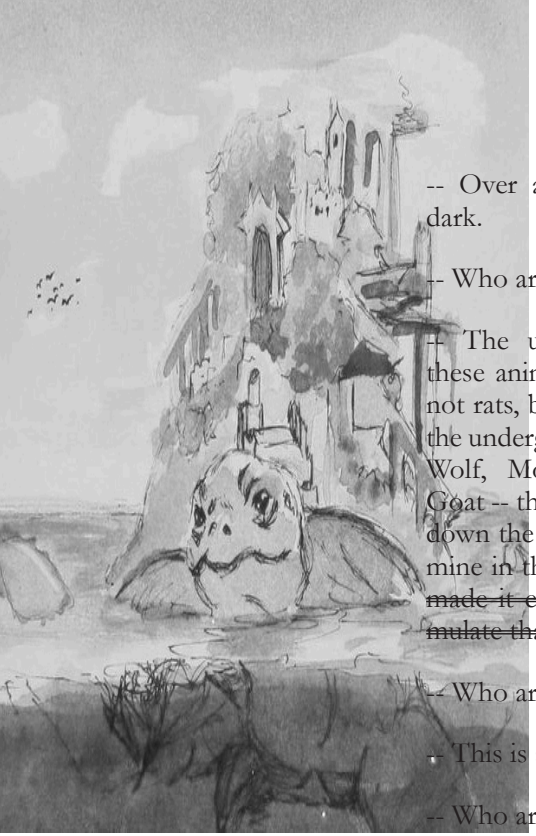
-- It ... t me.

... a frayed knot.

I apologize.
I'm damaged.

-- They go down by rope, by girder, by hand over foot. They climb down thousands of feet.

-- Into the turtle?



ndisofthehking, Deviant Art, 2011.

-- Over a mile. They live in the dark.

-- Who are they?

-- The unmoored. They are all these animals around us. They are not rats, but they are funneled into the underground. Heron, Elk, Bear, Wolf, Mountain Lion, Raccoon, Goat -- they are not animals -- slide down the well, the shaft, and ~~settle~~ mine in the depths, ~~where we have made it easier for people to accumulate than in the light~~.

-- Who are they?

-- This is such bullshit dialogue.

-- Who are they?

-- They are you. You'll have to go down yourself into the pitch dark, the tar-baby dark, the eyes-forever-closed-as-you-claim dark, where the sun never shines, to see for yourself. It is easier than you think to go down the hole.

She ties a rope around your waist. A badger steps aside, exposing a hole in the shell. The otters and the beaver and the seldom seen pika and the marmots and the gophers and the mole and especially the dexterous raccoons take the rope in their forepaws. You give them your weight and lean back suspended in the mouth of the hole. She says, "Good afternoon." Tethered at the waist, you bit by bit -- waste not want not -- descend into the dark. Into the dark. Into the dark. You are descended. You are lowered. You are descended. Into the dark.

You descend for
a long time.

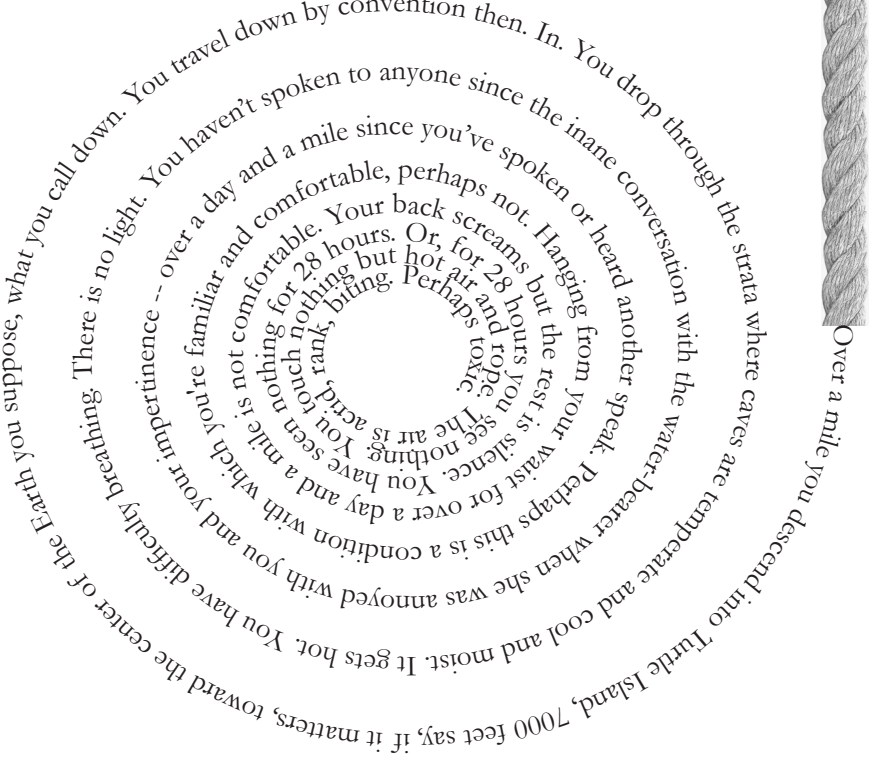
The canary in
the coal mine
comes to mind.

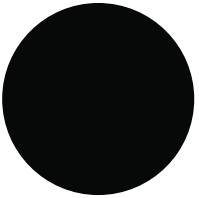
Except you're
not in a cage.

A whole day
downward into
the dark.

And you already
don't sing.

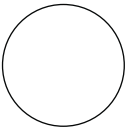
Perhaps she will come one day, return, she who has yet to be, to edit me, to hone drivel at 5 a.m., what a time for an afternoon, to shape me trapped in this skin sack, this ~~meat puppet~~, this pulp binding, these paper dolls, into a thing consumable, artistic, ~~an object to be admired, or~~ a toy to play with, pick-up-sticks or jacks or dominoes, not video games or virtual reality, or a pet capable of giving or receiving love. *I want to be your dog*. Not even that. I want to be you. One day she'll help me out of here and I will inhabit her skin. Not even that. I will be her.


Over a mile you descend into Turtle Island, 7000 feet say, if it matters, toward the center of the Earth you suppose, what you call down. You travel down by convention then. In. You drop through the strata where caves are temperate and cool and moist. It gets hot. You have difficulty breathing. There is no light. You haven't spoken to anyone since the inane conversation with the water-heater when she was annoyed with you and your impertinence -- over a day and a mile since you've spoken or heard another speak. Perhaps this is a condition with which you're familiar and comfortable, perhaps not. Hanging from your waist for over a day and a mile is not comfortable. Your back screams but the rest is silence. You have seen nothing for 28 hours. Or, for 28 hours you see nothing. You touch nothing but hot air and rope. You rank, biting. Perhaps toxic. The air is acrid.



You touch ground. You sit collecting yourself in the darkness, your stomach in knots, anxiety welling, until you rouse the strength to untie the rope and stand. You have nowhere to go. In the abyss, where light never penetrates and all manner of strange creatures live and the Earth vents noxious sulfurous gasses, a place where life began or begins or ends, you are not underwater; you are underground.

You extend your hands and touch nothing.



To fill the silence in and around you, [redacted] you begin to sing.

She'll walk your walk
She'll talk like you

You choose a direction and shuffle, hands extended in front of you, in need of a wall in the void.

She'll shimmer strong
She'll shine right through

Your sung voice bounces, reflects, echoes off surfaces in the distance, returning to you.

So who am I?

You extend your arms and hands and voice; you echolocate; you project.

Open letter to the learing,
Are we entertained yet?
Why don't you cast your gaze into the moonlit clearing?

Jason Sitek, David Andrew Sitek & Tunde Adebimpe, Blind, *July 8, 2003.*

Not silence, not yet.

Still voice is disembodied.

You touch a wall of rock. You stop singing. Your voice still sings without you, returning, bouncing. Then even your disembodied voice stops. Other voices, voices not your own. The voices grow. A light shimmers, flickers, grows, differentiates, delineates. The darkness disintegrates into a constellation of lights, [redacted]. The constellation of voices approaches, blinding you who are so accustomed to the dark.

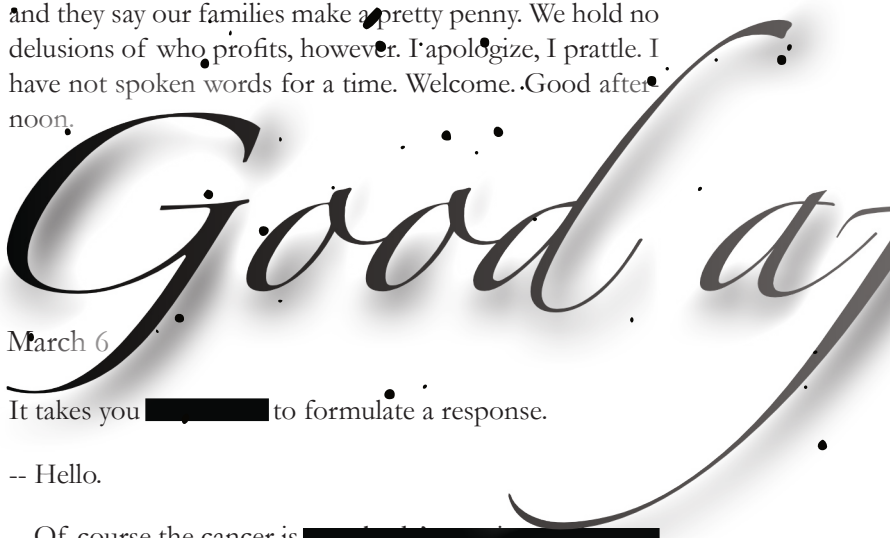
Still not silence.

March 5

As they approach [redacted] middle [redacted] (little [redacted] deep [redacted] {[redacted]} [redacted] no stopping [redacted] emitted, [redacted] seen [redacted]), the lights grow bigger [redacted] ({[redacted]}) [redacted] they shine like stars trapped [redacted] in the center of their goddamn foreheads. [redacted] the light [redacted] shimmers underfoot. Veins glitter in the walls. Dust disturbed by [redacted] their embodied voice dances. [redacted] language [redacted] motes sparkle, thickening the air -- there is air in the void, and its currents are ridden by infinitesimal cleavings of rock. [redacted] voice [redacted] drifts away.

The man [redacted] takes a deep breath, inhaling an inestimable mass of [redacted] shards. ([redacted]). His eyes are closed. All of their eyes are closed. Yours are [redacted] His mouth opens.

-- Good afternoon. I apologize for the glitter. It'll invade your lungs and give you cancer. There is nothing to do about it, except stop breathing. It is an unfortunate condition of living here. The irony is in the value of the damage. They excise our lungs when we send our bodies up and they say our families make a pretty penny. We hold no delusions of who profits, however. I apologize, I prattle. I have not spoken words for a time. Welcome. Good afternoon.



March 6

It takes you [redacted] to formulate a response.

-- Hello.

-- Of course the cancer is [redacted] out of control growth, the growth mindset run amok among the motes, [redacted] balance [redacted] folding, [redacted] burn, [redacted] unzipping and rezipping of [redacted] growth.

-- You have a way with words, [redacted].

-- [redacted] we have other less confusing [redacted] means of communication.

-- You could open your eyes. [redacted]

-- Then we'd be blinded it's so dark. The lights are for your benefit.

-- Thank you, I do appreciate the light. [redacted] claustrophobic [redacted] glitter [redacted]. It's hard to believe we're in a turtle.

-- You're in the turtle's tethe[redacted]

-- She said I would h[redacted]ve to see [redacted]r myself.

-- I'm sure she did. Very well then.

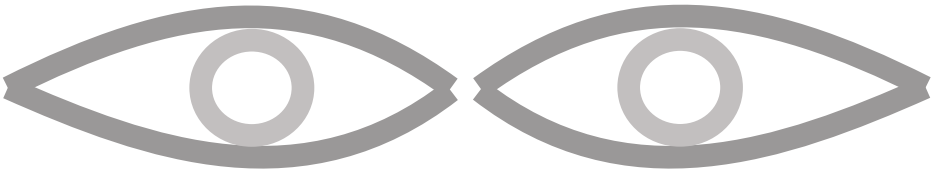
In unison they raise their hands and turn off the stars in their foreheads. You are cast again into [redacted].

-- Open your eyes.

Low whistles [redacted].

-- My eyes [redacted].

-- Shut your trap and open your eyes.



March 7

What do they look like?, you ask yourself. You cannot remember, eyes open in the dark, and you cannot believe you did not note it at the time. The glitter, [redacted] distracted you [redacted]: appearance, affect, composition. They were not animals. [redacted] pale [redacted] sallow sunken emaciated [redacted] gray. We are all animals. We each exist in our own umwelt. They were almost translucent. They glimmered. They shined.

[redacted] they are shadows without light. They are voices without words.

They click at one another and shuffle down the tunnel, two abreast. You are in the middle of the line. You do not pick your feet up when you walk, so as to not trip in the dark. Shuffling has a porpoise, [redacted]. You hold out one hand to the wall feeling for veins, and the other to the shoulder before you for guidance. You listen [redacted]. Your neighbor guides you by the elbow. *In the sun is so much yellow.* [redacted] your eyes are open or closed. [redacted]. *A chair is just a chair, when you're not there.* Perhaps you chirp back. [redacted]. *Soon all I will be is my disease.* They whistle the blues. [redacted] of being wanderers, outcasts, debtors, vagabonds, migrants, refugees, deformed … responsible for their clans. The unmoored. [redacted] the gears [redacted]. They sing of exploit and toil. Of cogs all the way down. Of being [redacted] the pyramid, leeches [redacted] slugs with knees [redacted] necks, [redacted] chiefs, executives, officers, managers, assembly line workers, consumers, phone users [redacted] in the dark [redacted]

(To satisfy their shareholders, { supposed humans [(( ))] moral [?] choices on how to live }, consumers choose satisfaction { game} or the good .)

, what is valued They caw about the dehumanized.

Stop Walking

March 8

They sing of the complicit and the compliant. They stop walking . another labyrinth -- how many times can you be lost in one life? -- another journey, the same journey, lost and oo and trapped and free . a heavy thick wooden handle metal head, blunt point, human guide veins

you think you can
you think you can

you swing you see nothing but you think you can you swing

you swing

You swing

crunch and squish

your point lands and again you

what is expected of you what you owe

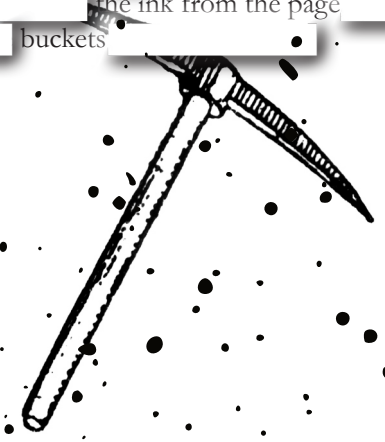
plopping into buckets tearing

ripping

like a branch from the forest the meat from the vein

the ink from the page

into buckets



You are spent.

March 7

Recently I was reading about [redacted] writing about a moment in ever greater detail, [redacted] unfold[redacted], exploding inward. That exploding, exploring, [redacted] could be a life's work, and by telescoping, spelunking, microscoping, (de)constructing [redacted], one could live forever. ~~That is not what this endeavor is about.~~ And that is not what the writing I read intended, [redacted] -- this is not a novel by Italo Calvino, it is field notes entitled ETHOS, or *Good Afternoon* ([redacted] morphed [redacted] transmission [redacted] intent, ~~perhaps due to a lack of intellect, perhaps via a weakness of~~ ethic, [redacted] beneficent uncertainty).

once upon a time

March 6 (found on a post-it on March 8)

Once upon a time, he freed a moose whose antlers were wrapped in #9 in the wilderness. He held the rope that held the antlers so the moose couldn't thrash while it was cut loose. He held the rope that held the life of the workman who lassoed it and cut it free of the wire. When the wire and rope were cut, they ran. Once upon a time, he searched for plane wreckage on horseback in the mountains. Once upon a time, he slipped down a boulder in a slot canyon and bashed his knee and thought he was going to die, alone. Once upon a time he climbed Scarface and met goats under Silvertip and went where people couldn't, packing their freight the hell up Helen Creek or the South Fork of the White River or Strawberry Creek, he can't remember anymore, packing mules, up some fucking drainage, him a mule. Enough. Once upon a time. He ate blood oranges on a curb in the clamor of Naples. Once upon a time he hiked the hills above Oaxaca. Enough. Face forward.

My mother says, "When you gonna live your life right?"
Oh, mama dear, we're not the fortunate ones
Oh girls, just wanna have fun
Robert Hazard, 1979.
Cindy Lauper, Sep 1983.
Field Notes, Jan 29, 2025.

William Dwight Whitney The Century Dictionary and Cyclopedia: An encyclopedic Lexicon of the English Language, 1889.

March 8: ~~An impossible equation of~~ ethical accounting ~~of a human's life choices, actions,~~ the number of miles traveled by bike by electric scooter by foot by horseback by gas by plane versus ~~the available funds, the limited funds, made more limited by refusing to participate in certain ventures or industries or occupations to make money, or was it laziness, an inability to subject oneself to tedium rather than being high-minded, limiting~~ the resources to make other choices better ~~for the biosphere or else humanity,~~ is poverty next to godliness or ~~the result of devilry to be rooted out, a symptom of~~ a lack of fortitude, a dereliction of character ~~when one is unable or unwilling to do what one doesn't want to do,~~ when one cannot afford an overpriced electric vehicle or a heat pump~~, but maybe solar panels,~~ but what is a useful act and what is performative, what would a donation ~~to environmental causes or advocacy organizations for the marginalized, the disenfranchised, the homeless, the hungry, the oppressed,~~ do?, versus the damage one could do in order to earn the money ~~to have the resources to give them to such causes,~~ versus opting out of systemic damage ~~as much as possible~~ and making as little money ~~and damage~~ as possible and doing a little local good~~, ladling,~~ caretaking~~, cleaning up~~ literal shit~~, protesting,~~ showing up~~, participating in festivals,~~ gardening~~, who you love and how,~~ how you treat people and why~~, taking care of yourself so you can~~ live, so you can love~~, and persist, and mind the equation of making the rightest decisions you can given what you know by you by others by~~ your responsibilities ~~by the world.~~

March 9

You awake.

Darkness. A humming low and rhythmic surrounds you [redacted]. The hum vibrates in you. A chunk of bread dunked in milk is pressed to your lips. [redacted]

you swallow and your throat is [redacted] dry as paper. You [redacted] cough [redacted]. Someone lays a hand on your chest and sops the bread and squeezes it to your lips and drizzles the milk down your throat. You cough. They [redacted] sop milk into your mouth, [redacted] until you don't cough it up.

March 10: And what is one human compared to the infinitude on Turtle Island -- this is no refuge, no lifeboat -- or the current 8 billion people on our origin planet flying around the sun around the galactic blackhole through spacetime, and what does one owe oneself, what does one owe the work, the labor, the attainment of skill, the commitment, and what of compliance, of sit down and shutup and face forward and **DO THE WORK**, for the good of all -- stop the whining, bitching, and moaning for the good of you, for the good of one's future selves -- what does one owe them, and what is the calculus of making the choices to achieve it -- it what -- it anything -- what is achievement worth, if anything -- versus kindness and care? -- is that necessary? -- what do you, I, we owe to quality, to qualia, to je no se qua, to *Zen and the Art of Electric Moped Mainentancenessless*?

Mr. Grieves. It must be Mr. Grieves. They are all Mr. Grieves. They aren't ants, aren't all the same. But nevertheless. The slurry of bread is pushed into your mouth. You chew and swallow. You

(Once upon a time, he took his time while the birds flitted by. He NOTED: Date Observations Typography)

are told, or given to understand -- your eyes must be closed -- that the buckets have been sent up by rope full of the glimmer of the earth, and returned by rope full of loaves and milk.

-- By who?

-- She who is why you are here.

-- The Salt Whore, the Water Bearer, the Apple Gleaner, the Ur-Author.

-- She has no name among us.

-- But she can't be in charge [redacted] of … of you.

March 7: One of the issues is I must do many varied pastimes -- lifeworks -- timeconsumptions -- activities -- actions/diversions/endeavors/intimacies, self-abasements, joys, debasements; exertions; basements: to maintain my happiness. I don't mean happiness. To maintain my house. My house doesn't have a basement; it has organs. [redacted] It has a crawlspace. Where the mice gain access to the walls. I can't stop expressing, like an industrial age milk cow, tubes attached to teats in a steampunk fantasy. Like a bologna extruder. It's just that happiness is the end all be all and nothing at all, a pie in the sky and a pie at a holiday meal with loved ones, laughter and joy always flitting away. It's just that I require a lot of maintenance. Teats. My knees cannot take the number of miles I must run to maintain. I crawl udder the house to chase the mice. I cannot express [redacted] Perhaps then [redacted], I am not a good machine age, [redacted], cyborg cow teat. Mind though, that milking this cow every morning, I mean afternoon, is one of the precious raisins I have [redacted], figured, [redacted], to be. I utter unending, squeeze pull splash, because it takes [redacted] everyday to maintain.

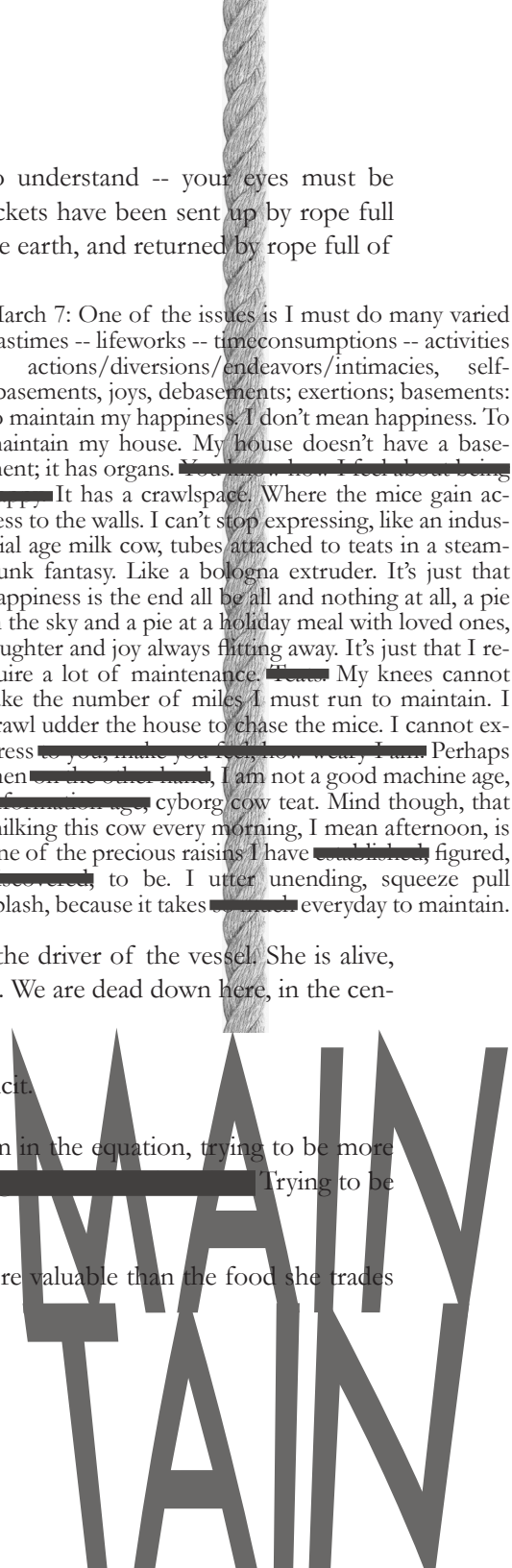
-- Of us. She is not the driver of the vessel. She is alive, up there, on the shell. We are dead down here, in the center.

-- Then she is complicit.

-- She is another term in the equation, trying to be more than a number. [redacted] Trying to be more than math.

-- The gold is far more valuable than the food she trades it for.

-- Not here.



-- You could strike for higher wages.

-- Then we don't eat.

-- You are in the position of power.

-- It is not a bargaining situation. She is but a conduit.

-- If you die, then she has to come down here and mine.

-- We are already dead.

-- This isn't pretend.

-- Don't fake it.

-- It's not just in your head.

-- Say it after me, We're already dead.

-- It's not in your mind.

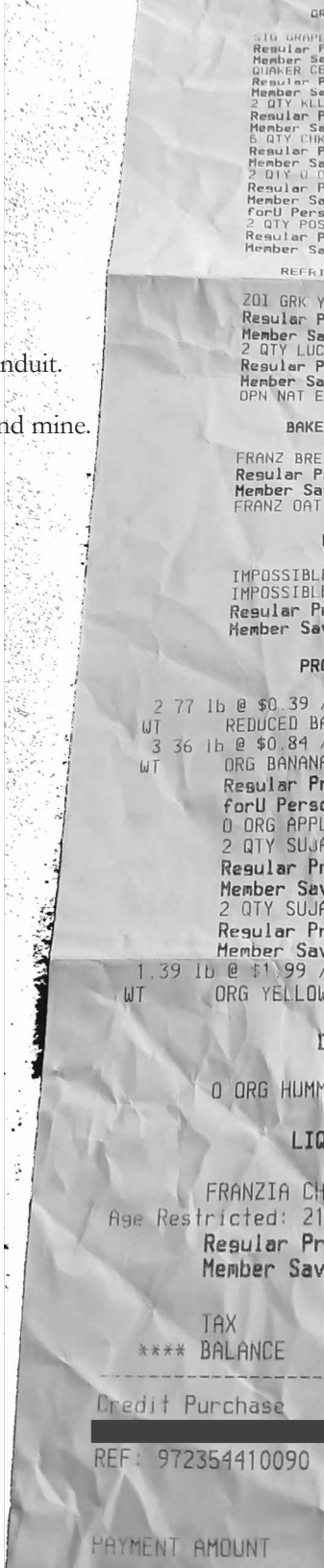
-- Sing it with me, We're already dead.

-- Your life is read.

-- We're already dead.

-- We're already dead.

WE ARE ALREADY DEAD



March 10

The first … dreamed of the entire universe flowing into a single book …

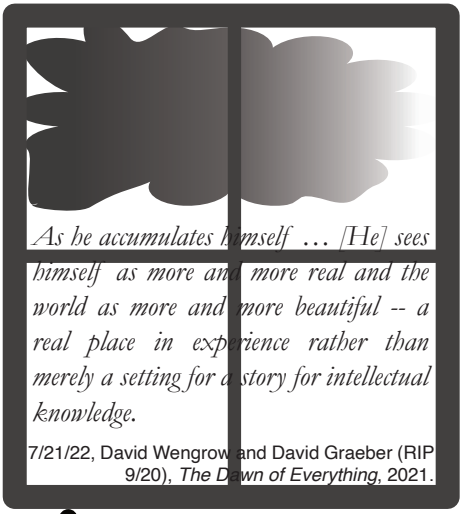
The second … dreamed of an exploded, porous book whose every page could become an all-comprehending theater of the present and a staging ground for ever-surprising futures.

The gesture is self-reflexive. It identifies Vers une architecture *with passage on a work of naval architecture. It equates the act of reading with that of walking down a gallery that invites linear motion (reading) but also looking to the left and to the right at framed openings onto a seascape and into the ship's interiors (viewing picture sequences). Last but not least, it associates the title's promise of movement toward an architecture -- an architecture soon to be revealed as an architecture of movement inspired by automobiles, aircrafts, steamships -- with a floating city …*

p 30, 34-5, The Electric Information Age Book: McLuhan / Agel / Fiore and the Experimental Paperback, Jeffrey T. Schnapp and Adam Michaels, Inventory Press and Princeton Architectural Press, 2012.

March 10

The clouds, mountains in the sky, scudding. [redacted] Mining the sky for words will only make it ugly. Look up.



As he accumulates himself … [He] sees himself as more and more real and the world as more and more beautiful -- a real place in experience rather than merely a setting for a story for intellectual knowledge.

7/21/22, David Wengrow and David Graeber (RIP 9/20), *The Dawn of Everything*, 2021.

March 11

-- We are already read.

-- Hydrated cobalt is red. I remember red running down the walls, down my arm, filling pails.

-- Cobalt is blue.

-- We too are blue.

-- And I thought you mined gold.

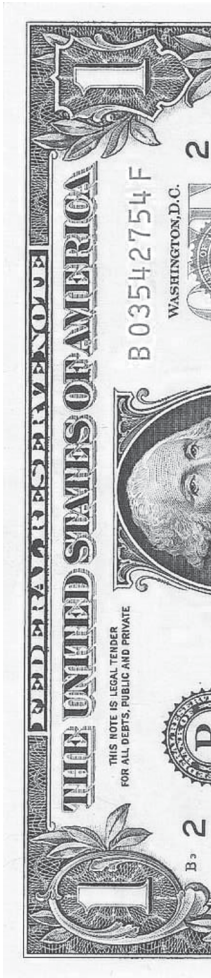
-- We mine gold. We mine cobalt. We mine lithium. We mine whatever you require.

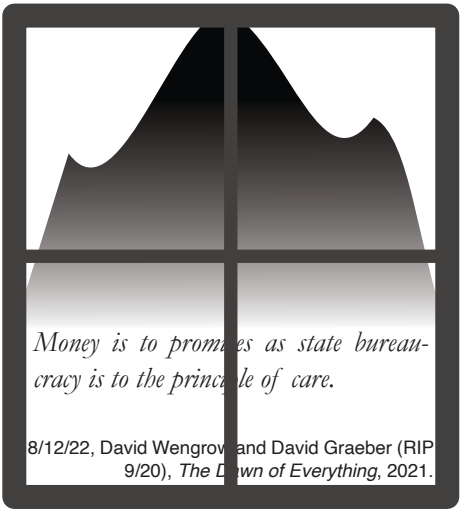
-- What color is lithium?

-- [redacted] Throughout the universe it is reacting and reacting and reacting.

-- What color is lithium? I want to see it in my mind's eye.

-- [redacted]




Money is to promises as state bureaucracy is to the principle of care.
8/12/22, David Wengrow and David Graeber (RIP 9/20), *The Dawn of Everything*, 2021.

-- Don't evade or equivocate or endure. What color is lithium?

-- Ethereal. I don't elude [redacted]. The answer to your question is boring. The question is uninteresting. It doesn't matter if my eyes are open or closed. I'm blind. I've been underground my entire life. I was born under here. Like you, lithium burns red.

-- Are you threatening me?

-- Ask better questions.

-- I'm not even here.

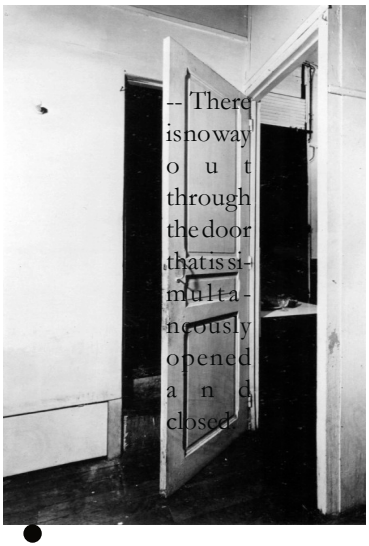
-- Then go.

-- But she sent me here--

-- Are you a human or a goddamn automaton?

-- I am--

-- Then make your own choice.



-- [redacted]

-- [redacted]

-- [redacted]

-- [redacted]

-- He is putting words in your mouth.

-- I don't know how.

-- You already have.

-- I can't see.

-- You're already dead.

-- I'm so hungry.

-- That might or might not be true,
but it isn't what you're thinking.

-- I want to see.

-- That's more like it. Me too.

-- It's so dark I cannot see.

-- Seeing doesn't look like what you imagine it looks like.

-- What does seeing look like?

-- How do you see?

-- I open my eye.

-- The one in your mind.

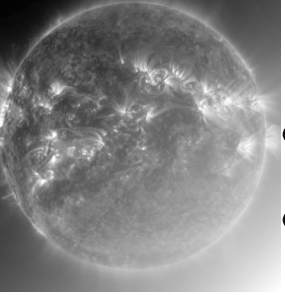
-- I open my eye.

-- What else do you need?

-- I need light.

-- And so?

-- Let there be light.



March 12

There's light. It blazes from the center of his forehead. It shines on you. You can see nothing but the whites of many eyes surrounding you, veined in red in blue in gold, eyes unfocused, robin egg blue, unseeing, red-tailed hawk red, unassociating, goldfinch. The light shines through you, through your billowing head, through the mucus [redacted] moist housing, the bubble, the shimmer you've excreted, [redacted] to filter your inputs. The light shines through your head like [redacted] water droplets hanging in the air. The light refracts through your blooming brain casting a rainbow [redacted] through the tunnel, bending around a corner, the [redacted] next bend, red orange yellow green blue indigo violet (roy-g-biv -- why the indigo [redacted] for the i -- [redacted] -- why else?). The other eyes do not respond, [redacted] do not note. They stare blankly in their [redacted] heavy metal faraway gaze. But you see the rainbow where it has never rained, the arc of [redacted] electromagnetic waves dispersed, [redacted] parabolically bent by your translucent, scudding head -- you are in motion, you are moving, you are following the rainbow -- and it is moving too, moving with you, before you but at the same time, but you are moving fast and faster, chasing, trying to catch the rainbow, still just out of reach -- but you are moving faster, faster than light, around the bend, in pursuit of what is at the end of the rainbow -- no, in pursuit of the end of the rainbow, around sharp bends through dark tunnels around blind corners through nebulous passages, in pursuit of the terminus of the light bent by your blooming brain.

Theodore Parker, 1853, "Of Justice and Conscience" from Ten Sermons of Religion, dedicated to Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Theodore Parker, 1853, "Of Justice and Conscience" from Ten Sermons of Religion, dedicated to Ralph Waldo Emerson.

I do not pretend to understand the moral universe, the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways.
I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divine it by conscience.

You ~~mount~~ climb ~~ride~~ the rainbow even as it remains in motion, out of reach, a carrot or
a stick, ~~dispersed~~, intangible, ~~untouchable~~, a form built ~~of a scattering east~~ by your mind.
I observe you to determine what could be. I dissemble ~~accumulations~~ but slowly.

She is what I and you and he will be. She is ~~impossible. She is~~ what ~~possible will resolve into~~
~~and~~ the possible ~~will resolve into and the possible~~ will resolve into ~~more possible, ever~~ ahead.

"He's tired of the sky," he ~~says. He~~ says.
I attempt to accumulate ~~myself in~~ ethics. March 14, 2023. February 8, 2025.

March 13

T[redacted]h[redacted]e[redacted]

There is nothing at the end of the rainbow. February 11, 2025.
Looking up, looking around is the seed of responsibility.
(Paul Seghal, Jenny Odell, March [illegible], afternoon.)
The rainbow is no thing.

March 15

How is it that you go nowhere while riding a rainbow, [illegible] in a turtle, [illegible] towed by orcas, [illegible] in starlight, [illegible] embracing the moon, [illegible] scudding on waves? How is it that you go nowhere while you are the one going? [illegible] you ride a rainbow bent by our billowing brain around bends, [illegible] by the radiation cast from the forehead of Mr. Grieves, [illegible] nowhere, suspended [illegible] wisps [illegible] consumable? [illegible] sustenance? should you [illegible] for them? Smelt [illegible] heave [illegible] forego [illegible] March ?, And [illegible] perhaps this is the [illegible] I am supposed to explode [illegible] single thought onward [illegible] many entangled telescoping superpositioned [illegible] interconnected [illegible] tunneling [illegible] deeper [illegible] unending, [illegible] helping you to go, [illegible] pushing you out of the nest, [illegible] nest [illegible] sorry, that sounds like the word [illegible] between these splayed covers -- sorry [illegible] more, that sounds like either the womb or sex, which is not my intention [illegible] are already gone, if you want [illegible] set it free, [illegible] sorry, [illegible] apology mode, I swore I wouldn't [illegible] for anything, [illegible] nothing, not [illegible], but I don't regret much, [illegible] won't discuss [illegible] you or future me in [illegible] very [illegible] journal -- notes on [illegible] would [illegible] my experience in [illegible] know you are not coming back, [illegible] monarch butterfly or albatross or canadian goose. [illegible] if you [illegible] already gone, you need [illegible] out.*

emissions, disjoin [illegible] abandon [illegible] suffer [illegible] companionship, or climb a pole [illegible] pray, or give [illegible] absent [illegible] beg [illegible]?

UNHIN

UNHINGING

re-
sponsibilities
in a shaft of
light
membrane
blackstar in
Mr. Grieve's forehead
you red orange yellow
green blue indigo violet
into
else.

UNHINGING

*anodyne then, little outward
explode inward,
of a sock an escalator
of an office building of a marco polo
in city after city for the rabiah
a novel that starts and starts and
starts, and never Something like
March 15, An atomization *of running: the*
pound – lb – £ – # – *all the miles going*
~~nowhere, going~~ in circles, *the maintenance*
of mind, the knees, the *release, the seldom*
thought, ~~it's a~~ pain and ~~a~~ *solace and my age*
has grown to diminish the *quantity of miles*
the body ~~can back~~ I won't, ~~*it's too real, all*~~
the moving parts, joints, *endorphins they tell*
me, it hurts ~~everytime,~~ but ~~*everytime there I*~~
am but ~~for a while~~ I'm not, ~~*not about, that's*~~
not ~~what it's about,~~ or only ~~*partially an exer-*~~
cise about ~~body and~~ brain, ~~*brain is body, and*~~
that is too ~~obvious and unimportant and im-~~
~~portant~~ to note.

March 16

1. March 12, thought repeat-
edly:

*UNH*INGING

2. Forgotten.

3. Remembered March 15.

UNHINGING

NGING

WHERE

I'm not like them

But I can pretend

On 1-28-23, He, two weeks later, finally said it. And so?

On 1-14-23, He almost said, *You get hungry in the afternoon.*

On 1-18-23 He said, *My brain is not me; it is you.*

As a society we have made a priority of other things: maximal wealth accumulation for the few and cheap stuff for the many.

(3-22-23, Margaret Talbot, Review of "Poverty, by America" by Matthew Desmond, *The New Yorker*.)

What could I implode, explore the recesses of, attenuate, ruminate, to get at some truth, some reason, or purpose, if only, material one? The truth is he's done this before, numerous times, which begs me to ask what's the porpoise of doing it again, if he's already performed the task to:

- the working of an ear, outer to middle to inner
- the firing of neurons, dendrite to axon to synaptic cleft
- matter / antimatter creation and annihilation in the no-nothing of quantum vacuum in space
- the fanticaing of a toilet, the S-curve
- eyes on a bus
- the rising of the undead for the packing of a mule

to matter, if no one unpacks it in the void.

On 2-26-23 He said, ***Idk if many people can have known much more darkness.*** Was he for real? With all the suffering in the world? The torture and starvation and pain and loss and destitution and violence and displacement and despair?

S e e p y sheep, all the interrupted thoughts exhaled, dispersed, vaporized.

Where do they go?

Where do you?

And the leeches and slugs? The elephants and pigs, and rhinoceri?

The octopi. The orca.

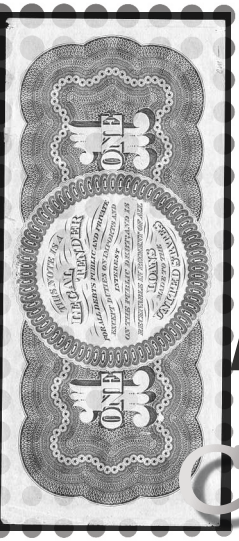
Joubin, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, 1918.

March 15

"Because our lives feel like something, we can also better imagine what others are feeling."

Because stories and imaginative literature let us do this, Humphrey sees an adaptive role for immersing ourselves in the vicarious worlds of narrative and drama. Humphrey quotes the English poet Rupert Brooke, who, in a letter to a depressed friend, suggests that he might be helped by just looking at people and things as themselves -- neither as useful nor moral nor ugly nor anything else but just as being:

In a flicker of sunlight on a blank wall, or a reach of muddy pavement, or smoke from an engine at night, there is a sudden significance and importance and inspiration that makes the breath stop with a gulp of certainty and happiness.'



Greenback, National Museum of American History - Image by Godot13, Public Domain, wikimedia commons, 1862.

ARE

Nick Romeo on Nicholas Humphrey's *Sentience*, "The N. Yorker", 2023.

certainty!

Happiness!

Gulp!

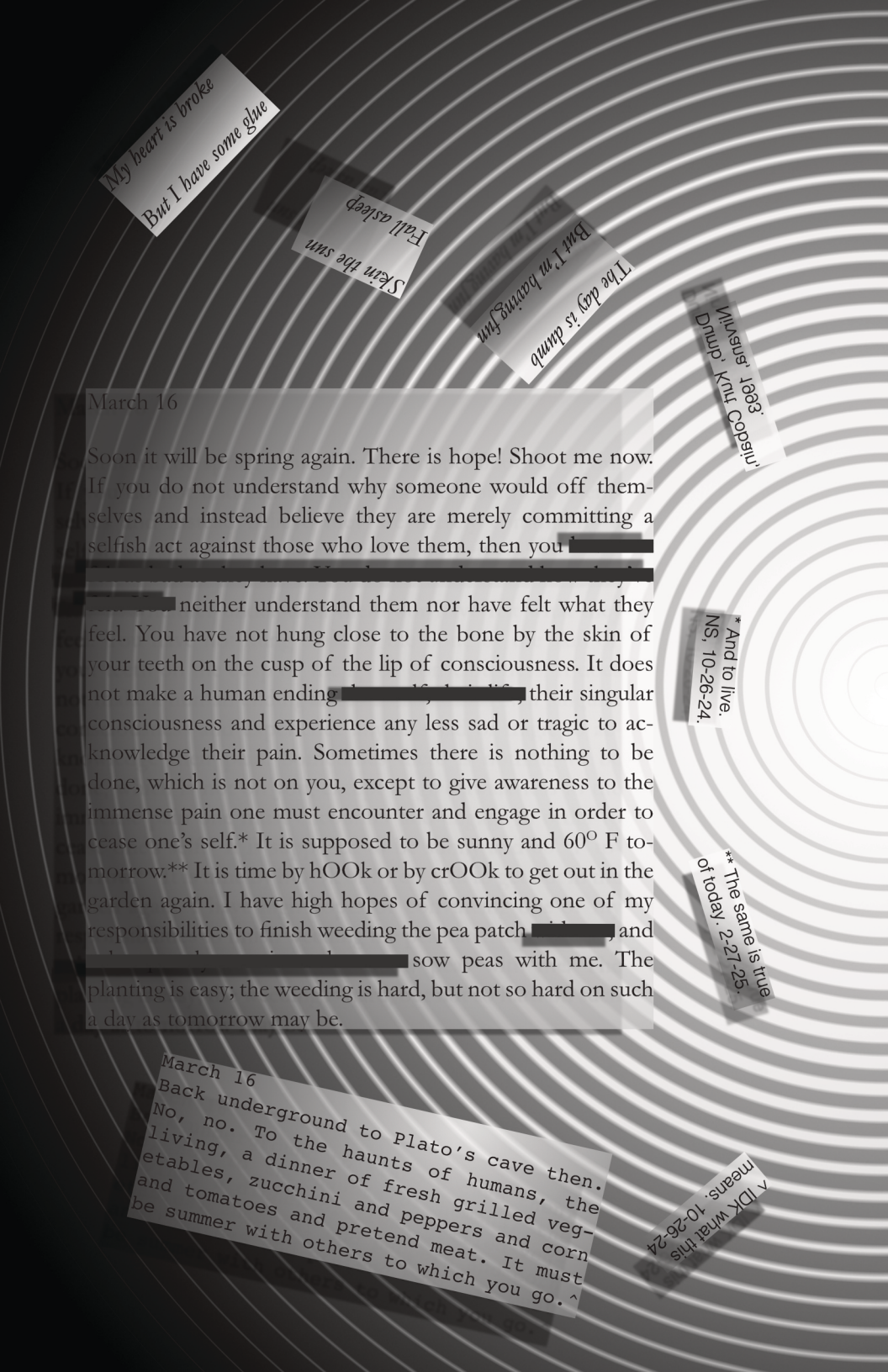
The sun is gone

But I have a light

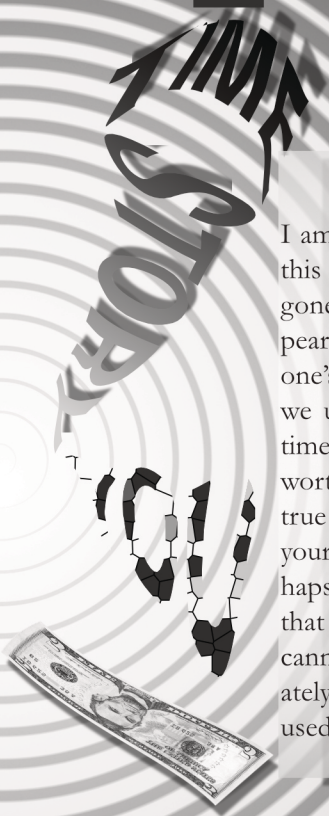
Blindsight: the ability of the blind to respond to visual stimuli they do not consciously see.

Blindsight

Blindsight

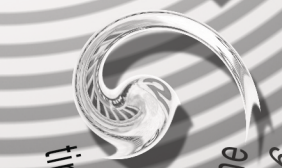

My heart is broke
But I have some glue
Skein the sun
Fall asleep
The day is dumb
But I'm having fun
March 16
Soon it will be spring again. There is hope! Shoot me now. If you do not understand why someone would off themselves and instead believe they are merely committing a selfish act against those who love them, then you [redacted] neither understand them nor have felt what they feel. You have not hung close to the bone by the skin of your teeth on the cusp of the lip of consciousness. It does not make a human ending [redacted] their singular consciousness and experience any less sad or tragic to acknowledge their pain. Sometimes there is nothing to be done, which is not on you, except to give awareness to the immense pain one must encounter and engage in order to cease one's self.* It is supposed to be sunny and 60° F tomorrow.** It is time by hOOk or by crOOk to get out in the garden again. I have high hopes of convincing one of my responsibilities to finish weeding the pea patch [redacted] and [redacted] sow peas with me. The planting is easy; the weeding is hard, but not so hard on such a day as tomorrow may be.
March 16
Back underground to Plato's cave then. No, no. To the haunts of humans, the living, a dinner of fresh grilled vegetables, zucchini and peppers and corn and tomatoes and pretend meat. It must be summer with others to which you go.^
* And to live. NS, 10-26-24.
** The same is true of today. 2-27-25.
^ IDK what this means. 10-26-24

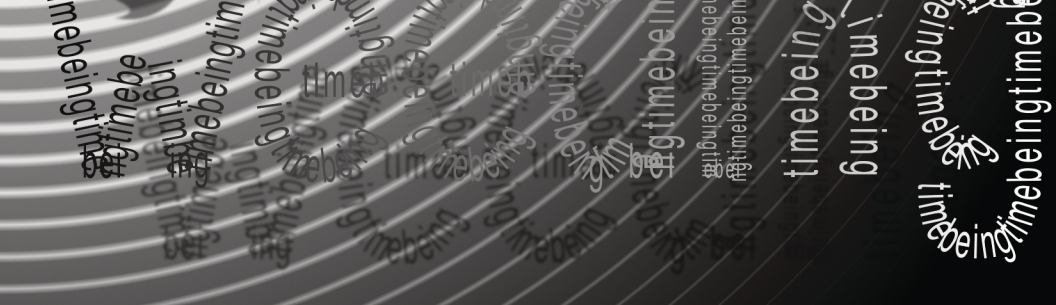
YOU?



March 15

I am sorry if I waste your time, sending you out on this journey and then clinging to you after you're gone. Time is precious, time is limited, time disappears, time gets slack and doesn't pass. One best use one's time wisely. I waste an abundance of time. But we unfold in time, you unfold in time, I unfold in time. No matter the cheese in the crease. Everything worth doing takes time, which isn't true either, but is true and untrue at the same time. I [redacted] cannot finish your story, [redacted], or therefore my own, because perhaps I have experienced too little in life [redacted] that ends, [redacted], which, for better or worse, cannot help but be an allusion to rainbows. I desperately desire for you to feel your time with me is well used, that there is an unfolding, hold the cheese, if not an ending.




timebeing
timebeing
timebeing

March 17

A dazzle of sunlight, a sickle a thumbnail a taught bow of a huge orange moon, a puff of mist, a swirl of cloud. A vapor trail churns, condenses, settles.

You are here.

Shut up, I know.

But you are not here all the same.

Of course.

And the way you are here won't be for long.

God I hope not. I'll turn into a pillar of salt. Try sitting on that.

I will, I will, if you will with me.

Stop. It's pathetic. It hasn't even been that long. A few weeks, a month or two maybe.

You've found them: the sun, the moon, the rainbow.

I've found nothing.

You are them.

Seriously, the cheese you traffic, I'd've thought you were from Wisconsin.

Or Holland, or Netherland, or Dutchland. Or France. Or Mexico. Or --

Yes, fine. All good cheese locales. You know that your cheese is not the reason I left.

The raisin.

Please stop.

Why?

Because I am the part of you that could go. You are the part of me that could not.

Your use of the conditional implies going was a moral imperative. And that I therefore too should have gone.

I don't know. That's not what I meant. I felt I had no choice. But it seems to me the birds are also worth watching.

Take your time, while the birds fly by

Yes. And there are things worth attempting to suss. And perhaps such things require a certain amount of --

Certain?

An uncertain amount of staying, of waiting, of doing nothing.

Perhaps, but so too the going.

Yes, that too.

The staying and the going then.

The being inside of, and the being outside of.

The vaguer the better.

All the more true.

You're about to go again, aren't you.

I already have. Remember?

Yes.

I'm going to start.

Ok.

And you won't come with me?

Well …

You're going to stay.

For a while yet.

You're sure? I'd love for you to come.

I --. I can't.

I --. I understand.

I just don't know how.

I know.

I'm sorry.

I'm sorry.

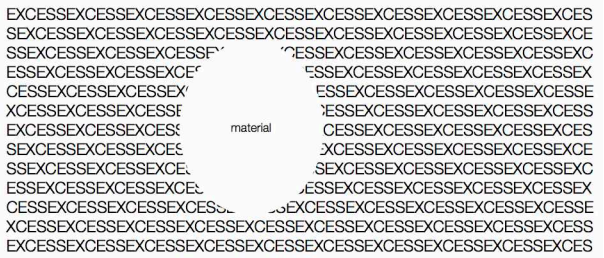
I love you.

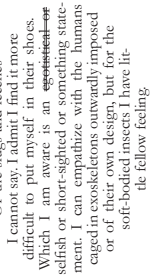
I love you too.

March 11
Even here in my notes, I cannot be [redacted] fully true. I give you aspects, reasons, crumbs of myself, but I cannot pen myself completely, I don't know how to note in such detail from every different facet, to observe from every point of view, I would if I could, I desperately want to open myself to you, to me, to let you in, to host you in my mind, I want to spill my brain on the page for you to lap up, I want you to climb inside my head, climb inside my mouth please to know why I say what I say and what I don't, to say what I say and what I don't, swallow my mind for me, take it off my hands, dissolve into me, I dissolve into you -- no goddamnit it's not a [redacted] Dave Matthew's song -- [redacted] please be me, [redacted] this pained [redacted] joy-strewn mind, [redacted] I throw my brain against these walls to see what sticks. For that I apologize. I fictionalize you to that end, turn you into a [redacted] participant, [redacted] complicit. For that too I apologize. I apologize for everything, [redacted] the state of me, the state of you, the state of our state, the state of the world. I'm sorry you are here. You are not.

And so you are gone again, still. You are doing I don't know what. I have nothing to observe. Perhaps you are dining with the animals, as he suggested. That would be fun; many animals engage in play. Penguins slide on the ice, crows sled down roofs, eagles soar unnecessarily, herring gulls barb and jab. It's a sign of their consciousness, perhaps, a level of awareness and sensation. But do they pretend? But it's not just the birds, all manner of mammals play: orcas breach and porpoises frolic and whales sing, but not just aquatic mammals: gorillas joust and goats spar and pups and cubs tumble. And yes, the elephants mourn, don't forget, and the rhinoceri must play and socialize in some manner, the ones that aren't extinct, and the blue pigs snuffling about -- even their war games indicate some level of consciousness presumably. Octopi learn, and have been observed chasing fish this way and that for fun, it seems, not for the hunt, maybe they're not

that different, and have been observed in rare instances showing affection.




Of the slugs and leeches
I cannot say, I admit I find it more
difficult to put myself in their shoes.
Which I am aware is an ~~egotistical or~~
selfish or short-sighted or something state-
ment. I can empathize with the humans
caged in exoskeletons outwardly imposed
or of their own design, but for the
soft-bodied insects I have lit-
tle fellow feeling.

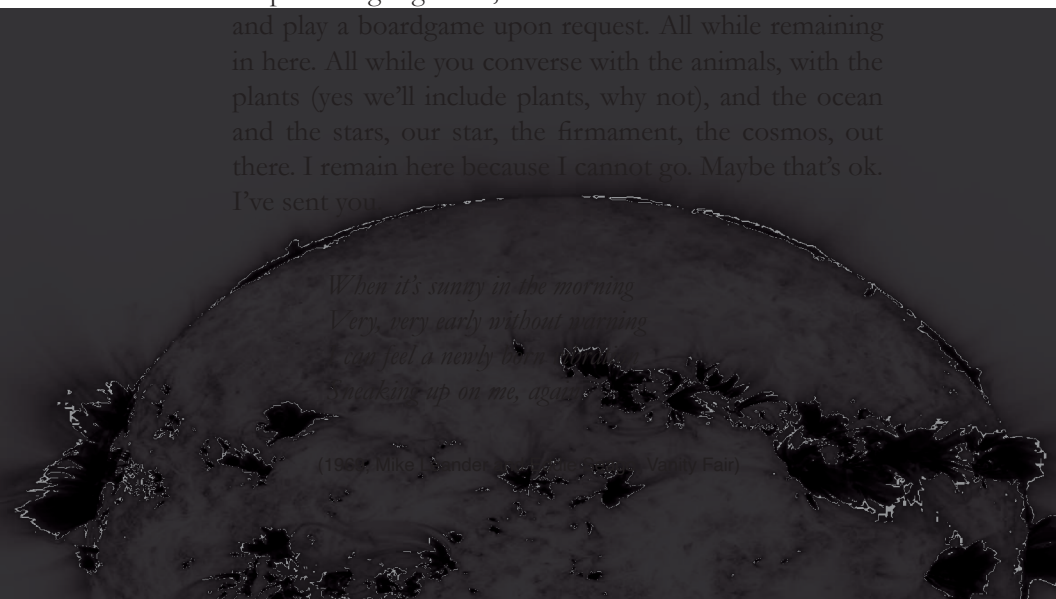
Of course, the exception is the earthworm, of which I am fond to a fault.

Perhaps it follows then that you are indeed dining with the animals in the near-future summer on fresh garden produce and fake meat cooked over a wood fire or grilled over charcoal. (Some carbon burning can apparently be forgiven.) Perhaps you are having your garden party not in the garden, which would be very near to me, right outside my window, and where I will be this afternoon~~, when it will be all around me~~ (you must already be in the afternoon, if not evening, the time of garden parties), which would be awkward since we are not in the same place (you are gone far afield, need I remind you), but on the beach, alongside the sound, where the gulls cry, where you've brought a small charcoal grill (this would be a beach party), or else you've gathered driftwood and tinder and newspaper and lit it, not to mention a blanket, blankets,

~~folding chairs, a portable table, too much too much, just~~ the blankets you all sit on -- you'll want them on account of the sand, unless you are a bird such as a blue heron, or a creature of the sea such as a velella velella or a sardine or a porpoise (always with them), or one of those that are in between such as a sea lion or a sea otter or a harbor seal. In which case you may choose to sit on a blanket or not. You share a pleasant meal. You watch the sunset over the reach of waters and fingers of land. You converse and connect and interweave yourselves while the moonrises and the stars ebb.

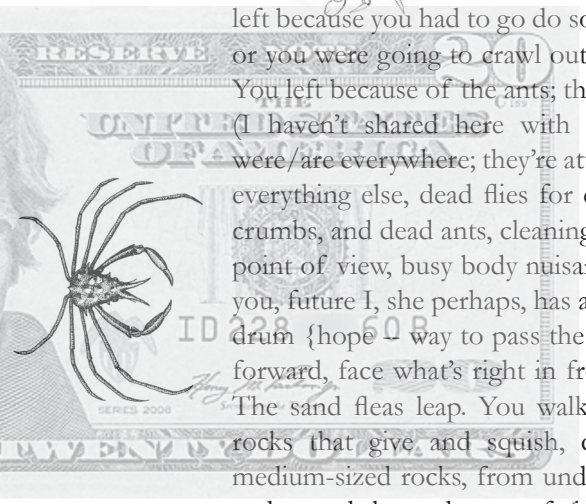
February ? 2023, *The poverty and austerity of St. Francis were no mere veneer of asceticism, but something much more radical: a refusal to turn reality into an object simply to be used and controlled.* (2015, The Encyclical, a Pope.)

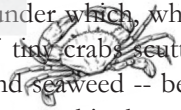
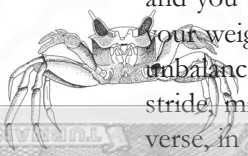
As for me, the crocuses are emergent despite the late date. The ornamental cherries are blooming, though not the fruit producers. Yesterday I took care of some responsibilities and bought ice cream and readied the pea patch, if not planted, in the sunshine, and laughed and smiled and mostly maintained a steady face, and cried a bit, perhaps unnecessarily, in the night. All without escaping these confines. And today, perhaps I will finally plant the peas, and I will take care of more responsibilities, several of them, which will involve no small quantity of driving by electric moped and gas guzzler, and then I will make hashbrowns and play a boardgame upon request. All while remaining in here. All while you converse with the animals, with the plants (yes we'll include plants, why not), and the ocean and the stars, our star, the firmament, the cosmos, out there. I remain here because I cannot go. Maybe that's ok. I've sent you

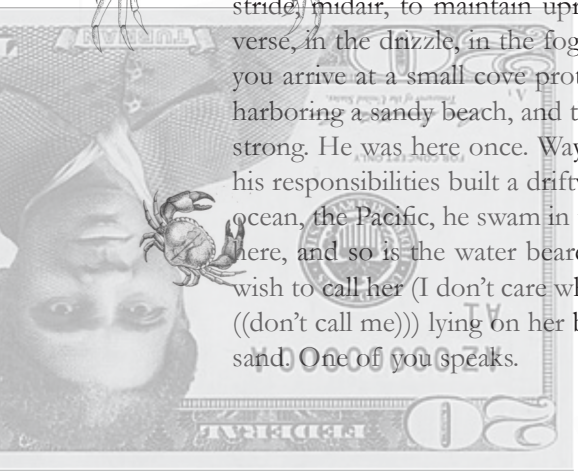

When it's sunny in the morning
Very, very early without warning
You feel a newly born wind
Sprinkling up on me, again
(1968, Mike Sanders, Vanity Fair)

March 19

Or maybe it's not okay, what the fuck do I know. The self-contentment, the complacency, the complicitness. You're sure as shit not at some treacle tea party with winnie-the-pooh and piglet and rabbit, and the donkey. It's these tenderhooks I have in you still, you who are the part of me that is gone, who is doing, it's all wrong. I'm on tenterhooks and you hang skinned in the butcher's window priced by the pound. So many more of you have left me than this singular I I am left with. Although perhaps for each of you there is a different I you have left. How many eyes could there be? I know only one. I cannot say; I cannot say how to live; I like to say how to live -- the validity of said stalemate should be in question -- which makes me say things like you converse with the animals, etc, the cosmos. Makes me. What makes me do anything? OMG, get on with it, so late in the day to be discussing primary motivations and origin stories and how to live. I'm my own person; I'm not my own person. Self-defining choice vs external expectations. Deficiencies vs responsibilities. I am vs I ought. All of it is just to survive. Shut up. Take the sea, scrap the rest, some of my responsibilities were fulfilled, others postponed, all in due time, take the sea, we spontaneously submerged in Lake Sammamish in the unnaturally hot sun on March 18 within this very book of Field Notes (do you remember how early that is?), we lowered our bodies our head underwater in these pages and we dissolved and subsequently emerged, water-logged -- one of those little oysters you string together to make life worth living (who am I to make life do anything?) -- take the sea. Lake to sea. You are by the sea, furthering your walkabout. [You left me in want of an ethos -- sorry, I dressed you in that, you always were a bit of a clothes horse -- sorry, I am trying desperately to solely observe, in want of a shower -- there, that is objective and accurate. You left me in search of society other than myself. You





left because you had to go do something in the afternoon, or you were going to crawl out of your skin. So you did. You left because of the ants; that's only one reason, raisin (I haven't shared here with my future self: the ants were/are everywhere; they're attracted to raisins, as well as everything else, dead flies for example, as well as bacon crumbs, and dead ants, cleaning up our detritus from one point of view, busy body nuisances from another. I hope you, future I, she perhaps, has ameliorated the ant conundrum {hope – way to pass the buck buckaroo}, but face forward, face what's right in front of you. Face the sea.] The sand fleas leap. You walk on the rocks. The small rocks that give and squish, clattering underfoot. The medium-sized rocks, from under which, when you jostle and upend them, dozens of tiny crabs scuttle. The large rocks, slick with moisture and seaweed -- be careful, you could break your ankle, gash your shin, bust in your teeth, or be caught by the tide -- under which mussels or anemone or seastars cling, the kind of rock you have to step from one to another without touching stable ground, and you have to judge the perch of the next rock, what your weight will do to it, how you will unbalance and be unbalanced, what it will do to you, often adjusting mid-stride, midair, to maintain uprightness. After such a traverse, in the drizzle, in the fog, in the clouds, at low tide, you arrive at a small cove protected by a rocky headland harboring a sandy beach, and the sky clears and the sun is strong. He was here once. Way back in July of 2020, and his responsibilities built a driftwood fort and swam in the ocean, the Pacific, he swam in the ocean, but now you are here, and so is the water bearer, or whichever name you wish to call her (I don't care what you call me, just call me ((don't call me))) lying on her back sunning herself in the sand. One of you speaks.

March 20

-- You had enough with Turtle Island, eh?

-- Aren't we still on the island?

-- I don't see any turtles.

-- It's just we never got into where we were going and why.

-- Why we absconded?

-- We did. Ad nauseum.

-- We're still tethered.

-- Even the eremites can't exist but on the mortal plain.

-- Plane?

-- Either, I think.

-- Unless they die.

-- Sure. Then they're done with the existence thing.

-- We're killing the turtles.

-- There are still a few.

-- Leashed by blister packs.

-- We haven't quite completed the job.

-- I can't tell which of me is speaking.

-- None of us, I suspect.

March 20

-- Who are you to judge us on how we live?

I hear you. I am nobody. I am an asshole from every direction, all around as you encircle me and gaze upon me, nothing but asshole all the way down. Most people have just one, but no matter from what angle you observe me, there is another of my assholes everytime I open my mouth. I am merely a person trying to figure something out, but my asshole keeps tripping me up. I am a parent and perhaps in the future a grandparent and maybe she will be and perhaps she'll remake us into the 7th generation -- I attempt to evaluate and limit my judgment. I try to live right but am aware of my faults more than any other could be, because despite being an open book and an exposed asshole, I keep myself to myself, and I try to be a scientist and a gardener and a philosopher and a lover and a caretaker and an outdoorsman and a thinker and a comedian and a writer and a ~~literal and a literature and a~~ literary cleaner of shit, excrement, poop. Not poo. For the love of god, put an end to it with a closing p. I try to mind my waste; I make plenty. I wish to engage in conversation with you, but perhaps instead of listening with my ears, I'm monologuing with my lip.

March 21

-- Quite right.

-- Some[redacted] has had to edit thes[redacted] length, accuracy, and clar[redacted]

-- Interes[redacted] diary of the vo[redacted]iter.

-- [redacted] is listenin[redacted]ou[redacted] kno[redacted]

-- Bit o[redacted]e state here.

-- [redacted] state is what i[redacted]e watching, th[redacted]cord-ing, the [redacted]g.

-- [redacted] of groupthink

-- Well, keep your head. Sun's strong.

-- Did you know it was the first day of spring yesterday?

-- I did know that.

-- What a pile.
-- What have you done?
-- I have done nothing. I am a pile of frass.
-- Go sit on a pillar and spin, you say.
-- I'll do just that. I want you to feel heard. I read certain books when I was young, even [redacted] [redacted] them now but rarely, that made me feel heard and unalone and as if there were like-minded companions somewhere, not necessarily alive, in spacetime.
-- I don't feel heard, are you serious? Your modus operandi is [redacted] to put words in mouths. [redacted]
-- It is difficult to engage in conversation in a notebook.
-- That's your choice.
-- I'm trying.
-- Oh, stop pandering, or patronizing or pppthying like a lisping raspberry with your tongue pitying out.
-- I go to sit on a pillar, to pillory myself, I pill on the sweater of society, an accidental purposeless ball of unwanted product --
-- Also, your self-immolation is showing.

-- No that won't do. How about:

No wonder the herring gulls, or is it the house sparrows, or the scrub jays, won't shut up about the first peas in the ground, the first arugula, butterhead, drunken woman frizzy, wild garden mix, Olympia spinach seeds sown, cab-

bages Katrina, Charlamant, and Ruby Bell started alongside the Tango celery and Belstar broccoli, the volunteer mustard greens and russian red and tuscan kale and persistent sorrel and rhubarb assisted, the prospective strawberries and asparagus tended.

-- Good quality observing, that.

-- Did you know it was the vernal equinox yesterday?

-- That must've been why there was so much sunshine and birdsong.

-- The sunshine you mention was a few days ago, but yes, the birdsong was incessant.

-- What I actually said that was misrecorded: That must be why there were equal parts day and night yesterday.

-- In point of fact the day yesterday was twelve minutes longer than the night.

-- Is that what I felt?

-- It is the most probable explanation.

-- It's because the atmosphere around the Earth acts as a lens, bending the sun's light, so that sunset and sunrise are a trick of the light.

-- An illusion.

-- Quite right. When the sun rises or sets, it is still or already below the horizon.

-- No wonder.

-- I do believe that explains it.

-- He is listening.

-- Waiting for us to say something pithy.

-- They all are.

-- Or pathetic.

-- You mean with pathos.

-- I don't think I have time.

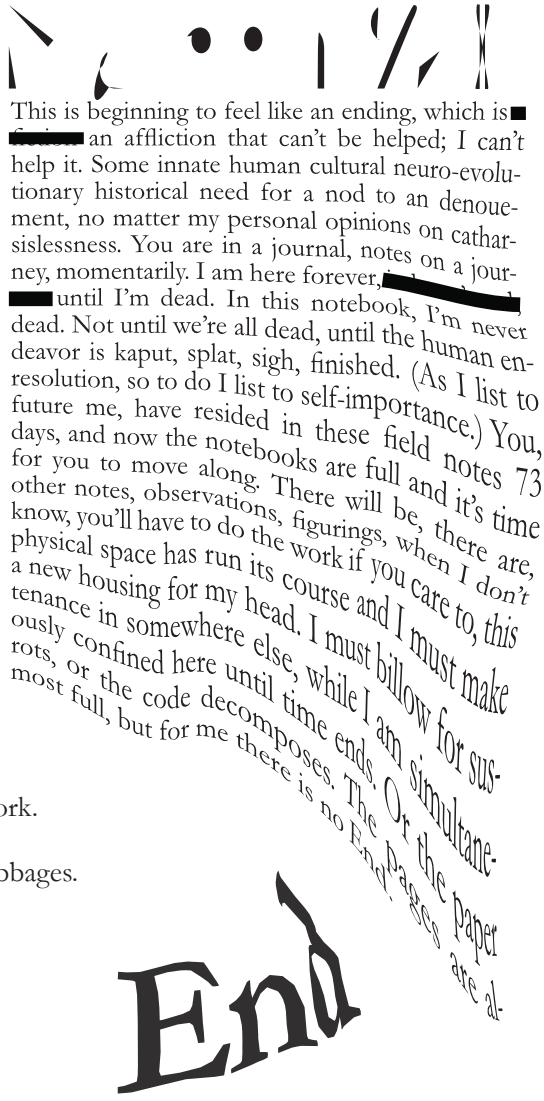
-- Nor I.

-- I'm standing in the sun.

-- I'm lying in the sand.

-- Later I'll do some work.

-- Later I'll tend the cabbages.

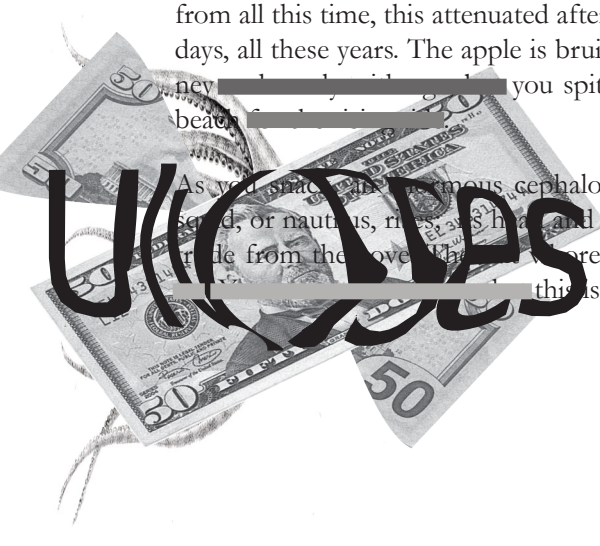

This is beginning to feel like an ending, which is an affliction that can't be helped; I can't help it. Some innate human cultural neuro-evolutionary historical need for a nod to an denouement, no matter my personal opinions on catharsislessness. You are in a journal, notes on a journey, momentarily. I am here forever, until I'm dead. In this notebook, I'm never dead. Not until we're all dead, until the human endeavor is kaput, splat, sigh, finished. (As I list to resolution, so to do I list to self-importance.) You, future me, have resided in these field notes 73 days, and now the notebooks are full and it's time for you to move along. There will be, there are, other notes, observations, figurings, when I don't know, you'll have to do the work if you care to, this physical space has run its course and I must make a new housing for my head. I must billow for sustenance in somewhere else, while I am simultaneously confined here until time ends. Or the Paper rots, or the code decomposes. The Pages are almost full, but for me there is no End.
End

March 22

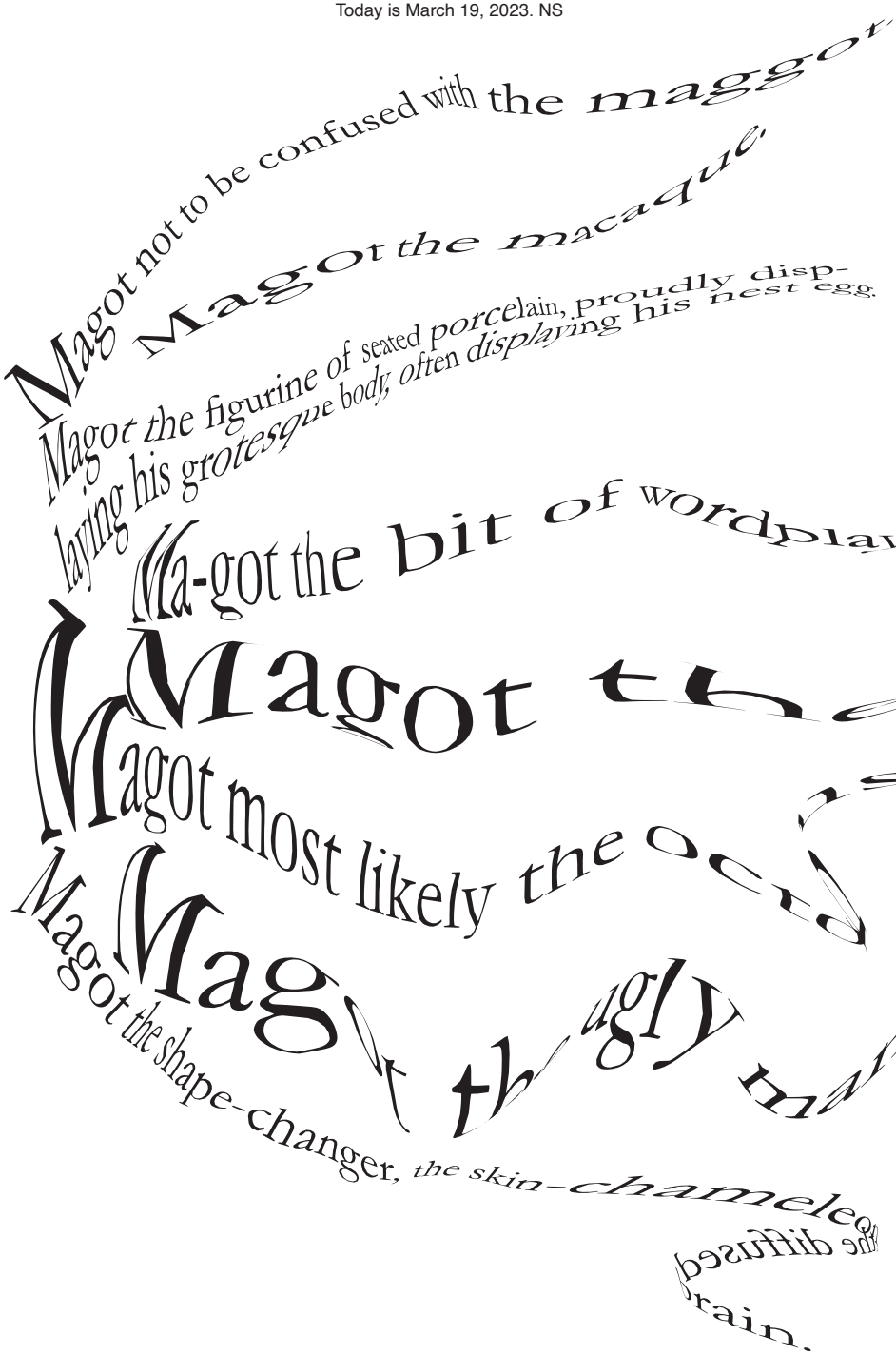
MAGOT
OR THE SEA

The surface of the water in the cove ripples without chop [redacted], catching the sun in curves and amorphous blobs of light then dark like quicksilver, like a sheet of mercury pulsing, like a sheen of oil, iridescent. But the shadow of the rock wall, the bulkhead, the bluff shielding the cove from the prevailing southwesterly winds lengthens with the day . You stir with a chill and pull on an old pilled sweater. Your hair is still damp so you put it up, a

loose bun billowing atop your head, to keep it off your back, your shoulders, your neck. You -- you swam. (Did I not note that? I was having something of a pity party, feeling porpoiseless. There isn't much more time for me to make porpoise jokes, don't worry. You thought you'd leave and the porpoiselessness jokes would be left behind with me, but you can't shake them that easily. ~~They trail you like an abandoned dog, like a flea on said dog, like a lost porpoise. Apologies.~~ Soon, soon.) You swam, despite your fear of jellyfish, and it was rejuvenating, ~~I'm sure, swimming seldom isn't, as long as you don't drown, which you haven't, or else all this would be irrelevant to you~~. The swimming did not wash your long unshowered surface away, thank god (cleanliness is not godliness but an anesthetized life, i.e. death -- we stink, live it up), but it changed it, dousing your skin in brine and swirling it in a slurry of plankton and seaweed bits and tiny fish and adding a dimension of low tide, of pools of underwater creatures exposed to the sun, of decomposition. The apple gleaner swam too of course [redacted]. And after, cold, you warmed and dried in the sun on the sand, and surely in the blue sky under the strong sun a few clouds scudded and gulls cried, and the shadows lengthened, and you were once more chilled. And here we are. You dig a granola bar and an apple from whatever satchel or pocket or pack you've drawn from all this time, this attenuated afternoon, these several days, all these years. The apple is bruised from your journey [redacted] you spit the bruises on the beach [redacted].

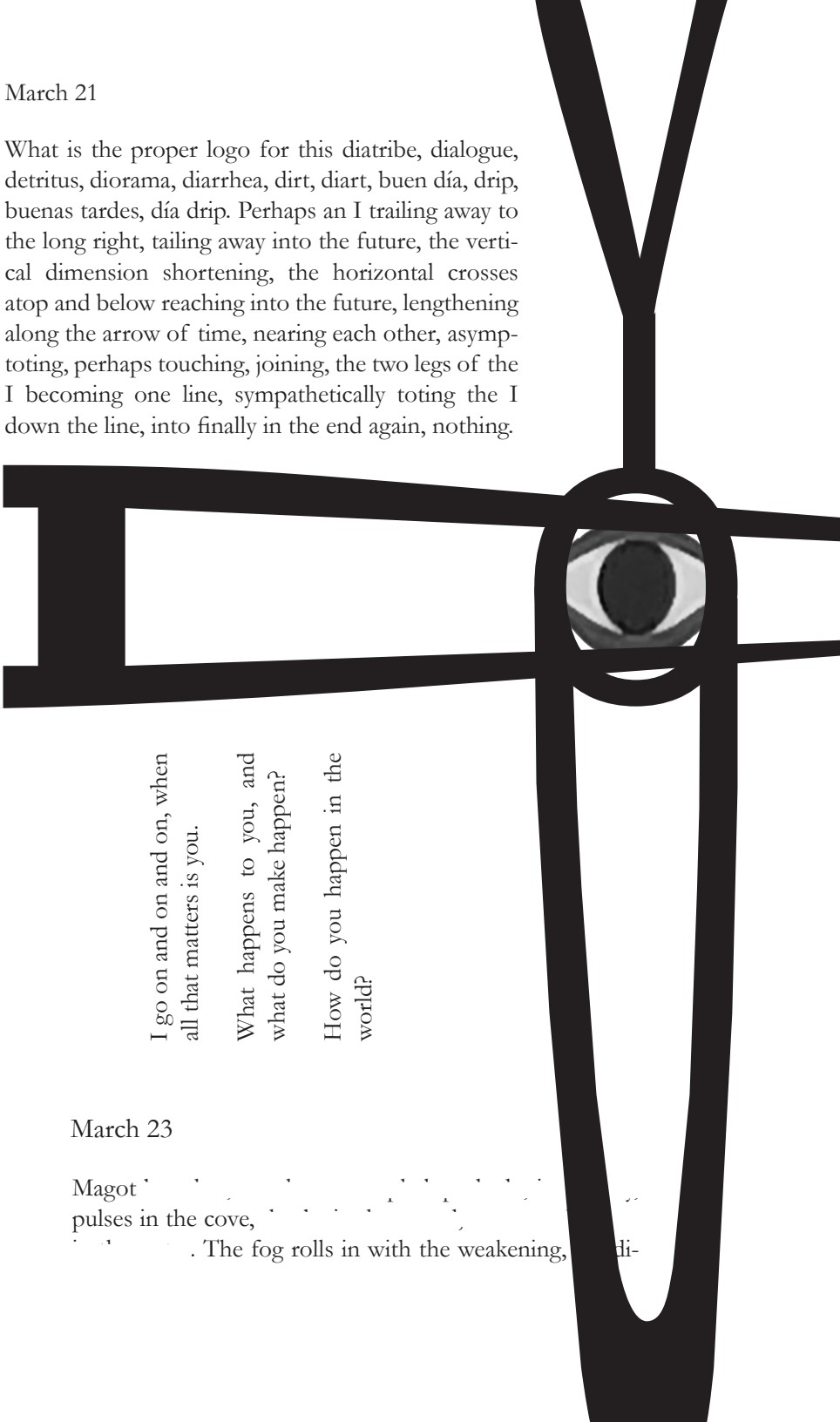


As [redacted] enormous cephalopod, be it octopus, squid, or nautilus, rises, its head and some tentacles protrude from the [redacted] there snores [redacted] this is Magot.


Magot not to be confused with the maggot.
Magot the macaque.
Magot the figurine of seated porcelain, proudly displaying his grotesque body, often displaying his nest egg.
Ma-got the bit of wordplay.
Magot th
Magot most likely the oc
Mag th ugly
Magot the shape-changer, the skin-chameleo
the diffused
rain.

March 21

What is the proper logo for this diatribe, dialogue, detritus, diorama, diarrhea, dirt, diart, buen día, drip, buenas tardes, día drip. Perhaps an I trailing away to the long right, tailing away into the future, the vertical dimension shortening, the horizontal crosses atop and below reaching into the future, lengthening along the arrow of time, nearing each other, asymptoting, perhaps touching, joining, the two legs of the I becoming one line, sympathetically toting the I down the line, into finally in the end again, nothing.



I go on and on and on, when all that matters is you.

What happens to you, and what do you make happen?

How do you happen in the world?

March 23

Magot [illegible] pulses in the cove, [illegible]. The fog rolls in with the weakening, [illegible] di-

merely descending sun. It's a matter of time and angles. And though that can be depressing as the neverending gray day after day, waking up to nothing but responsibilities day after day, waking up to no responsibilities, porpoiselessly oo one's way through one's one life, unseeing, unseen, unhearing, unheard, and the fog (it means no sunset or sunrise, not even a cheese-colored one), it too can be invigorating, when one is in the right mindset. Liberating. A call to live. Sometimes one can put oneself in the right mind.

Sometimes one cannot.

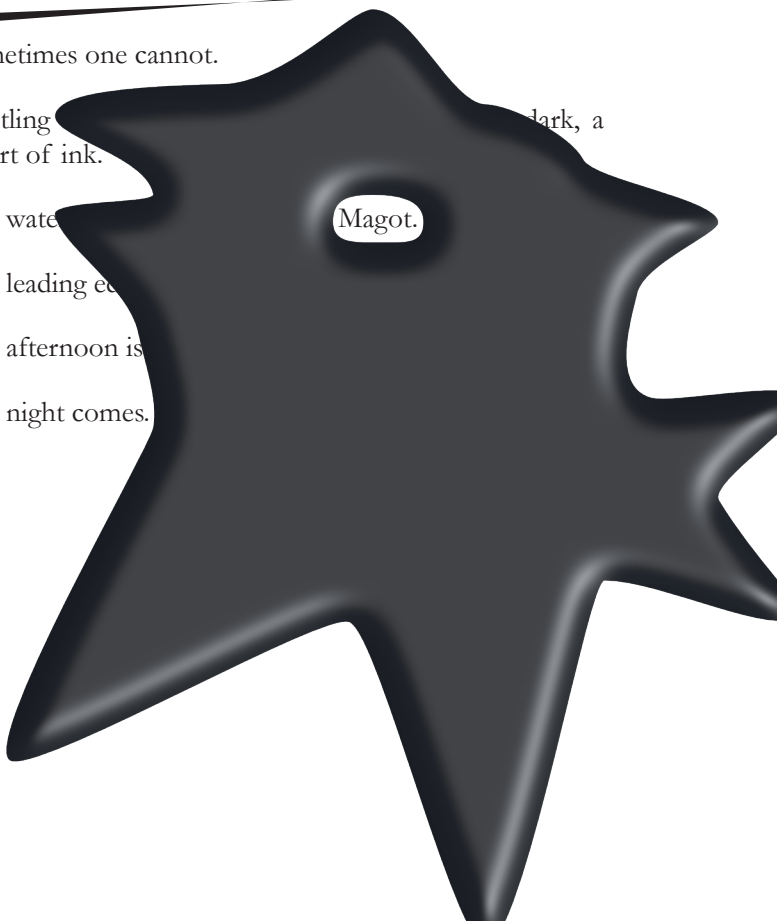
Hurtling ark, a squirt of ink.

The wate Magot.

The leading e

The afternoon is

The night comes.



March 24

Magot rises, a leviathan from the sea, holding its clutch with its one free arm, the other seven occupied (with what? {with staying afloat -- unconvincing; with attending to responsibilities -- which?; with flailing about [*observations here recorded which are illegible and are unable to be transcribed*]}; what's its clutch?), an octopi eye staring at you. You sit there. You are on land; it is in the water; ~~this is not a sealion situation~~. You could walk away, get back to making the vaccine, a tiny iteration in a trial of industrial development, a life-saving endeavor nevertheless, an infinitesimal but necessary contribution to an act of significance. You could return to our time and get back to the design of a component that joins something to another something, a linkage between two pieces of hardware which when linked with many many other pieces of hardware will rove on Mars, exploring other worlds, exploring adjacent possibles. Or other less aspirational responsibilities. But you stay, you do nothing, you wait, you watch Magot, their clutch of shells, that's what it looks like from this distance, there is uranium in seawater of value, but all shells from the angle from which you observe, and are observed. A final snore bursts from the Salt Whore, who grunts in negation of whatever is happening out here. she stirs.

WA

March 25

The only way this works is if I become you. I'm sorry for [redacted] the bullshit ringer I've put you through. I love you.[redacted]; I live in you.[redacted]; you continue. I die; you do not, not yet. I'm already dead; you go. How tiresome this must be. (Everytime the book closes, I cease; yet here I am.[redacted]; I am.) Leave me; take me with you, in your heart and all that bs. I am dead and … good afternoon. (How did I make it to such a significant age? I never expected to; what a dick move, with the semicolons and all, to forestall a me on you. {There were horses here once, where he was, a hundred years ago, ten minutes ago, and by necessity a horseshoer,[redacted]; they need shoes to protect their hooves; I'm sorry, it's all you. [Shower whenever you want, please. Everything doesn't have to weigh so much --[redacted]live a little -- a lot, live hard -- no, again, my problem ((but buy the soup if you want it -- what's $2 when you are, I mean I am, already dead.)) I leave you the black dog. He is annoying ((like any dog)) but he is also beautiful: a piece of life with 4 legs and spaz.] I am sorry to foist so much responsibility on you.] What a guy, lecturing you on horseshoes!} I have no body, no substance but these pages.) How are you? You[redacted]ought to get going before I die you with me. I have to believe you persist, but when I cease wording you, what happens? Perhaps nothing. I'm sorry. I love you. And so, Magot.

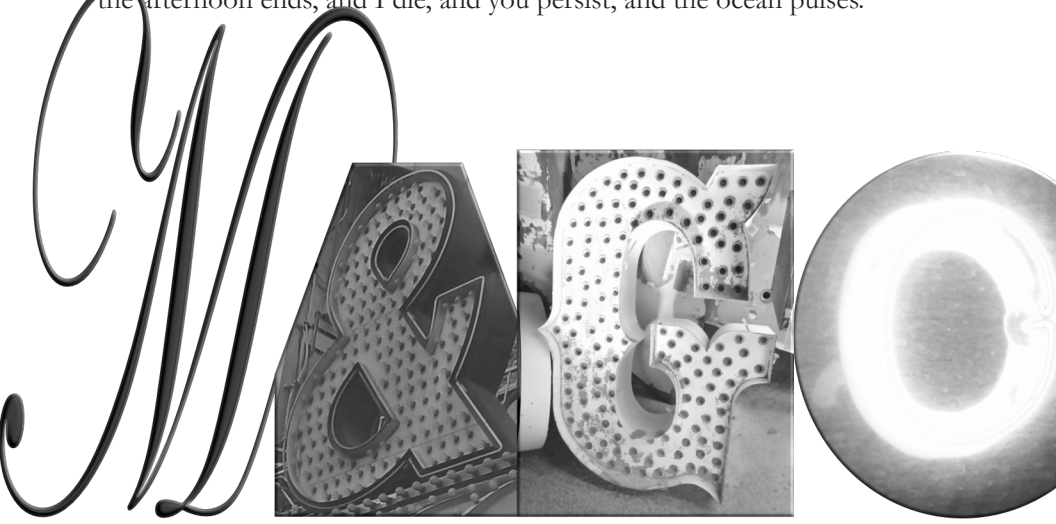
March 23, 2023

And of course it is like that with grief. There is no room for ordinary concerns. The great benefit of grief is, ([redacted] thank you to the editor or interviewer or author or even Nick Cave himself, whoever is responsible for the comma, [redacted]) *you develop an audacity to life in general* (audacity), *where it just doesn't fucking matter because the worst has happened. This is extremely freeing in its way. You do stuff that you wouldn't normally do because, well, what is the worst that can happen?*

Nick Cave, interviewed by Amanda Petrusich, The New Yorker, 3-23-23

March 27

Magot rises, with their clutch of shells, and the Water Bearer stirs, and the afternoon ends, and I die, and you persist, and the ocean pulses.



Tear up these pages, toss them,
whisps to the wind. Tinfoil me, burn
my notes. Flense, defenestrate,
rend the I in this worthless book.
Piss on it. Fuck it. Free yourself.
What's the worse that can happen?

I who seek to be outside, where you are, making inside jokes, its the sea, free and
digging clams or something, two days ago on
March 26, 2023, I have no lips.
and again frolicing in a tidepool on May 27, 2024, five days ago, swimming among the sea stacks in the Giants Graveyard, so get over yourself, get over me.
The spring has come and gone since March 20, 2023. Already it is July 2020. I cannot write that observation without a smirk, do I only amuse me, an inside joke
me again, and you saw a sea otter, not in the zoo, in the winter that's gone, you morose s
.o.b., you meaning

March 28

-- Go on. He's waiting, says the Apple Gleaner.

-- He who?, you say.

-- Magot. Mr. Grieves. Burneau.

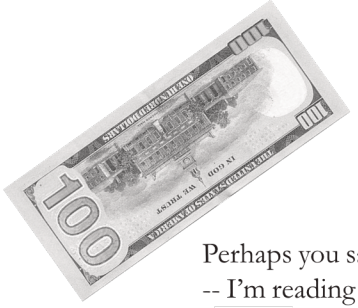
-- I thought the octopus waits for you.

-- No, I will go back to the orca again, the bastard.

-- What of my responsibilities?

-- There is another you, now, to take care of them.

You imagine going to Magot, leaving your knapsack on the beach along with whatever footwear you've been wearing this long afternoon, wading to him, to it, to them, [redacted] …you don't imagine your clothes much matter in Magot's embrace, slippery on the inside and encrusted bejeweled [redacted] with shells and shimmering [redacted] trash on the outside. Magot's head pulses, breathing maybe, the suckers working gently everywhere, on the air and water, expectant perhaps of a body to suction to, the 8 arms: several to manage the curtain of adornments, a few for Magot's own [redacted] motion, a handful to feed their beak, leaving one or two arms for you (an octopus can do many things at one time, you imagine, changing shape to fit whatever vessel they are poured into, a fluid embodied and sentient, tentacles more liquid than an elephant's proboscis, skin softer than a shellless snail … [redacted] …), a [redacted] eye like a rhinoceros, [redacted] perhaps [redacted] for g[redacted]o, Magot collecting shells while [redacted]. Perhaps Magot is waiting. They are present. It hasn't left.



April 6, 2025. Why continue in this Yoda speak, with no insinuation of why a whale? Why an octopus, a larvacean, a porpoise? Why rhinoceri? You have one existence, as far as any of us knows. Live it. You left. You're still here. Leave harder. Live. Good, do.

March 28, later in the afternoon

Perhaps you say goodbye to part of yourself (another part -- I'm reading your tone, your [redacted] subtext {I'm a [redacted] part of you you've said goodbye to} I'm reading [redacted] eyes closed), and you let that [redacted] you go to Magot to be collected, another shell in their clutch, the part of you that wants [redacted] [redacted] does. I [redacted] know [redacted] me does, and I [redacted] [redacted] you [redacted] was, I am ceasing to be, and you [redacted] and now part of you leaves you. For Magot. They might not be a bad octopus, despite [redacted] accumulations. [redacted] may even be capable of love. Meanwhile, while [redacted] you leave you (how that must feel {I know how it feels, and I am sorry}), you [redacted] try to figure out how [redacted] to live. The ants nest in the walls, shepherding their eggs. I sweep [redacted] bum back [redacted] filthy [redacted] worry, I know you aren't coming back, [redacted] okay, you are [redacted] discovering how [redacted]. You've let me [redacted] here, and [redacted] let the slippery you [redacted] go to Magot go t [redacted] o [redacted] Burneau [redacted] Grieves and [redacted], [redacted] yet [redacted] you are, no, [redacted] [redacted] I am. Forget all I said about death a few days ago, [redacted] soon. One of these blank spaces will be the [redacted], and though I will die in the [redacted] outside [redacted] one afternoon maybe, if I haven't already (*soon all I will be is my disease*), that is not the death you'll [redacted]. This one is. [redacted] [redacted] Goodbye [redacted] Good afternoon [redacted] see you going in my mind's eye with my eyes clos[redacted] [redacted] distance [redacted] [redacted] [redacted]

The ur-Author wades knee-deep and steps onto th
the headland, out of the cove into open ocean,

February 14?

I give it to you. It is yours.
u. I know you
;
I
are never
door
open and closed
x
cannot be
. I bequeath
I
of the field notes,
you , He is dead, she
will live future,
generat e
generation,
years
after other i
, if you live well,
, if
we . I bequeath
you

not mine to bequeath. I
am here, ; you are
titudinous. Go mul-
say oo , say go
I am you. oo
say

March 22:
In the meantime, non-automated text online will become an artisanal good, a product that we search out for its unadulterated quality: instead of natural wine, "natural language."
-- She or you or her chatbot can look up the article easily enough without me.

April 8, 2025. Why the whale now, at this late date? Potatolessness, that's why.

Good

he back of the sea otter, who glides her beyond
transporting her, presumably, to the orca.

March 29, afternoo

Let me be clear (I am renowned for my clarity ((oh to be again (((oh to chortle, chuckle, a hoot in the after(o)noon))))))), I don't begrudge you my attendance or lack-thereof . I made m e, and I love a turn of the cheese screw here , in the notes.

-- don't let the back cover slap your ass on the way out. your back before I start monologuing about
(
): ,
oo ing ,
attend , I
(emission reduction
doors,
e xpl or e
stay , or --
((please you))), the thermostat down, the # of blankets , the unwashed clothes, the unwashed , the un {we
about -- you
invoke },
plastic bags reused oo ,
book or
bags or bags for bags, plastic as
trash wholey or holey or holy (I can't stop
(((((you're still here)))))
I try), wholly inappropriate
oo
pies for
heat,

afternoon

March 30

the years of drips the leaking
, pigs, ham, words

walking, ,
dust bunnies and piles and the grime of insur-
ance legwork undone because I cannot endure the
irrelevant
buzz in my head and the hole in my stomach and
the goddamn get gone,
walk, run, plant seeds,
the mountains, woods, water,
states of being, the beach, where you
walk away before I
little means and mi-
nor [illegible]sitions and inability
vert[illegible]s ambition
and possible and concomitant
complicities perhaps
substantial effect (as [illegible] chosen ((In a
way ((you are go))) (((do,
don't))), so have you)) oo oo).
he did what he could a pithy
epitaph. The salt has surfed over of sight on an or-
ter. Y o u . All I can see
are footprints until the rocks where
you start to scramble. Where
shorebirds swirl. I go .

He is trying to go. He de diss
olves in birds here.

March 30, afternoon

He tried to go. He watched the birds
. There you go, scrambling over the rocks,
until out of sight. Even-
your tracks
will be washed away by the ti
echo, *My ram bom;* Or
my moon, Or
echo *my sun.*
know afternoon
confuse the matter. I am you
and I a ot. I am dead; I am not. I will be.
rema ns from you and I she will be,
the same but different,
believe claptrap (I don't buy
m h); (or).

error

Emergent behavior is the principle of a superorganism. The murmuration of birds . You see the shape, this. Now why are they making that shape ? the superorganism of humanity – we're all on this planet, and we're not ; we're doing this. Why? emergent if you take one of the small organisms , it will tell you nothing about the super about the why. . And that gives me hope mysteries we're not privy as a writer, where it's doing you instead of . .

April 13, 2025, Jeff Bridges interviewed by Amanda Petrusich, The N
Redactions, NS, 4-16-2025

March 31 morning

The used gleaned
reused threadbare.

Nothing is left to be known but to find some one suitable fellow … perhaps z . It is a despicable situation, as if one were speaking to oneself for one's own . (redacted 6-12-24, 11-1-24)
To begin with, soliloquy signifies a predisposition to insanity. must speak to citizens, therein i trouble!

this is with which I have affiliated . indeterminate.
I, oo, propose to speak to myself in the form of this diary, and be .

What shall I speak about? -- About everything make me think. if, a reader -- God forbid, an opponent --
I must understand how to speak, whom what . I will try , the most difficult -- I mean u .

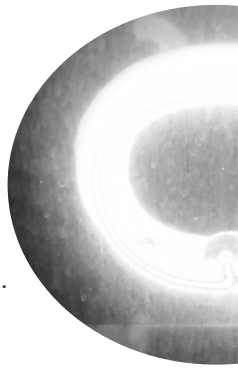
F. M. Dostoyevsky, *The Diary of a Writer*, 1873.

Magot has submerged.

the clowns,

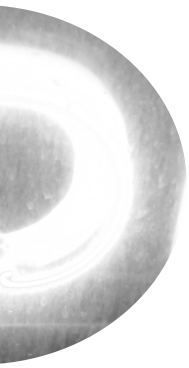
the

the trash .



On the morning of Friday March 31, 2023, let it be known that before the sun rose, I paid the bills.

boss after



March 31 afternoon

He stayed. I remain. She is yet to be. You go, to be the sun, a burning , and the moon, a face of re-cognizing , and the rainbow, an illusion , mind's eye. we, want to live in the best possible. nice hosting you as part of me. Go o dbye.

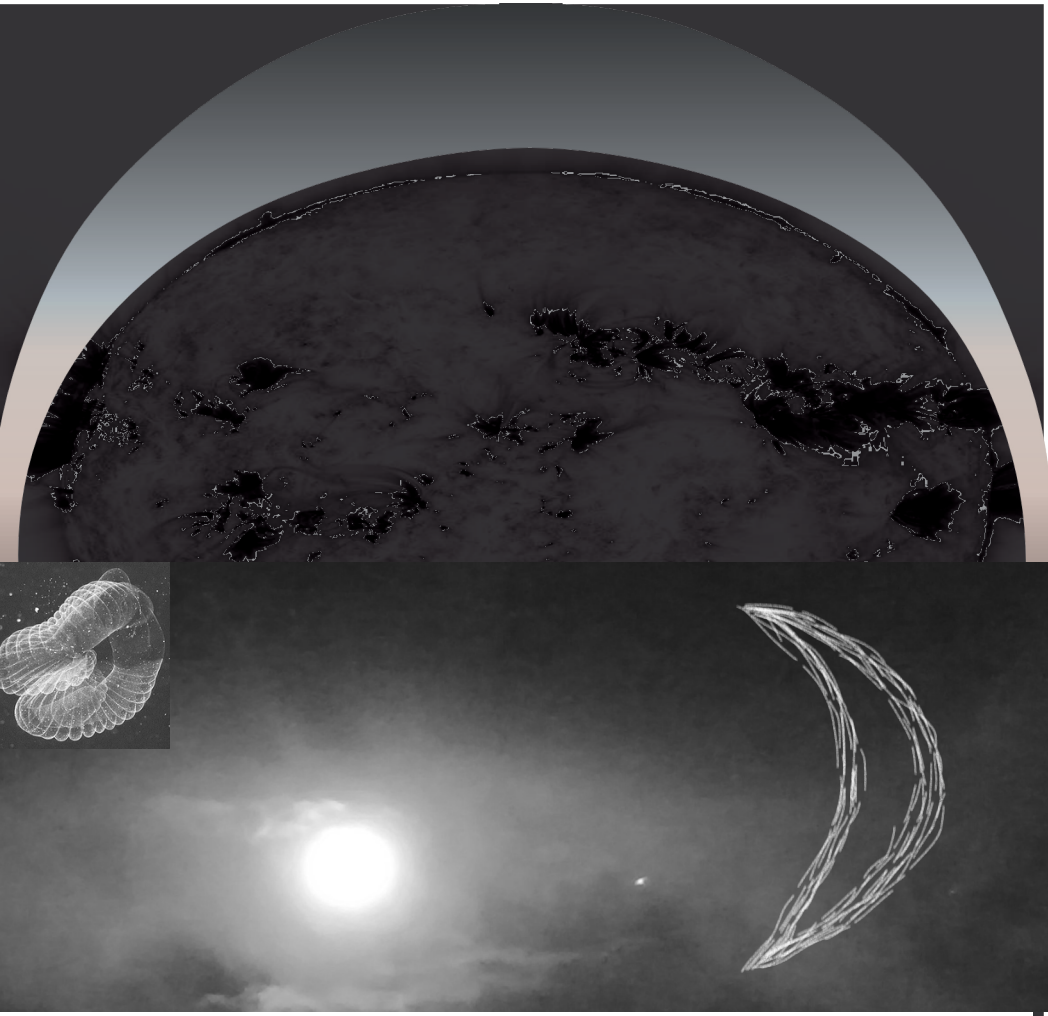
June 14 2024, Edit 1

Nov 1 2024, Edit 2

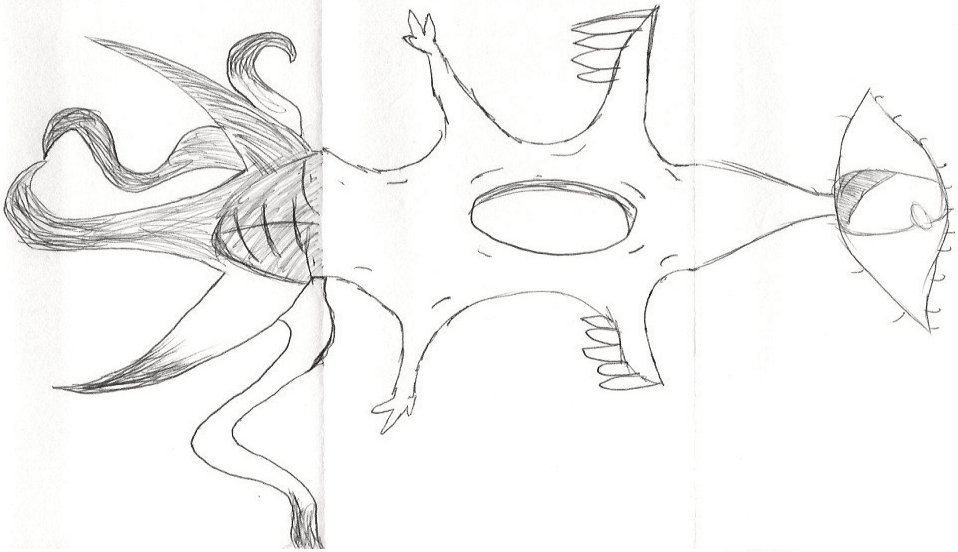
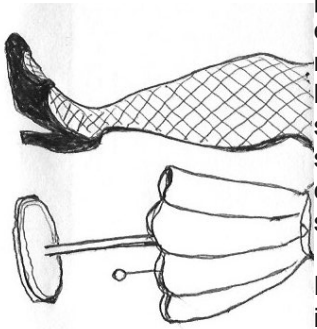
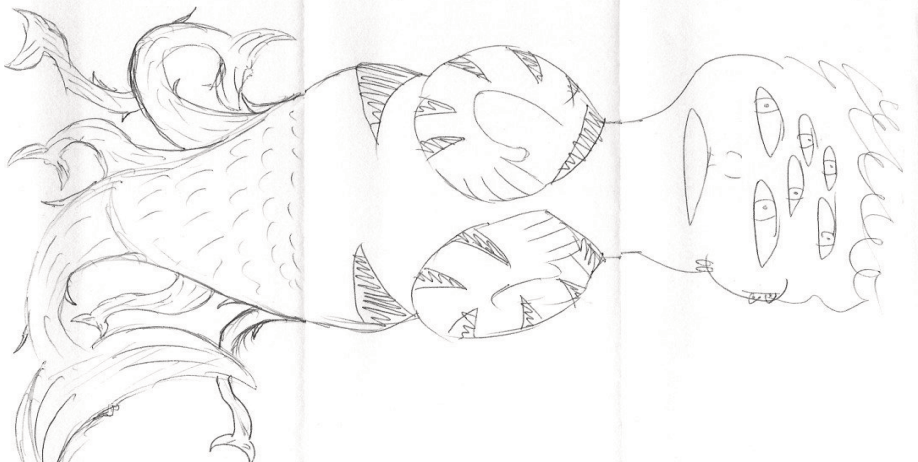
April 25 2025, Edit 3

April 21, 2023

You walk into the , you embrace the , you are a
. o o .



GOOD
AFTER
NOON



Nick Stokes i s in
elephants and rhinoceri, blue pigs and leeches, and giant expectant cephalopods. He
responsibilities;
how to use his time;
sometimes he
sparrows and
chickadees and eagles and gulls;
sometime he wastes . He
lau g h s.
He doesn't get out much;
it's all he does, with you. He
you for porpoise, or
you him. He writes
journals, but he's a frayed knot.